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SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

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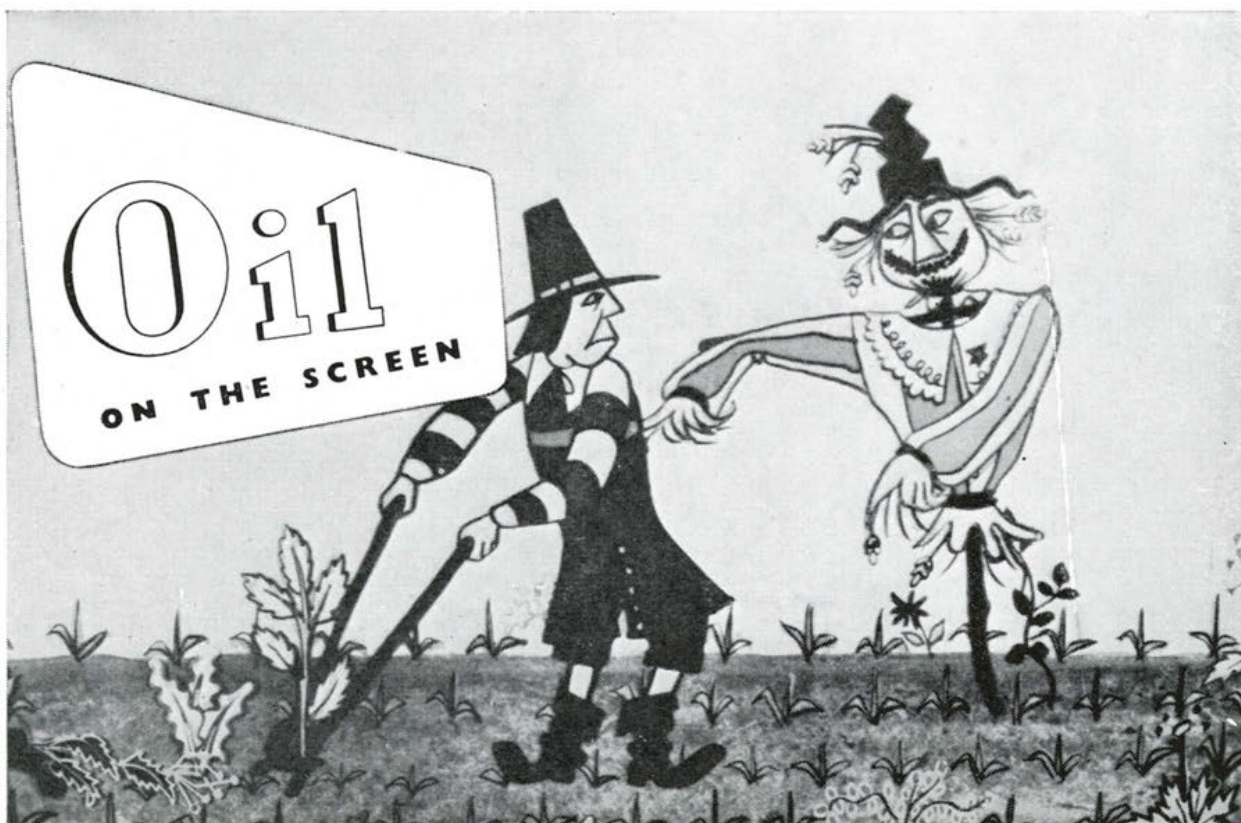
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Jean Simmons and Marlon Brando in *Guys and Dolls*, the Goldwyn production based on the stage musical.

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THE FRONT PAGE

SHOULD a critic be, thoroughly to misquote Wilde, a man who knows the meaning of everything and the value of nothing? Should he bring the standards by which he judges life to bear on the art he sees in the cinema, or should he content himself with scrupulously following the first rule in any novice critic's handbook: "Decide what the film-maker has set out to do, and then decide how well he has done it?" These are some of the questions raised in a letter from a reader, Mr. J. R. Taylor, published in our correspondence columns. SIGHT AND SOUND contributors, Mr. Taylor argues, are on the wrong critical tack: they are concerned with content and meaning rather than form, with what a film sets out to say rather than the apparatus with which it says it. They are, in the inevitable jargon term, "committed".

Mr. Lindsay Anderson, as the most resolutely "committed" of SIGHT AND SOUND's contributors, has been invited to comment on the issues raised in this letter; and his article is both a personal statement and a definition of the arguments for commitment. That the practice of criticism involves special duties and responsibilities is also the theme of the article we publish by Mr. John Maddison, in which SIGHT AND SOUND comes under fire for what Mr. Maddison regards as its neglect of documentary. In both these articles there is a demand—and we believe a significant and necessary one—that the cinema should be taken more seriously by its critics.

Although our record in covering the non-fiction field is, we believe, less black than Mr. Maddison's comments might suggest, we agree with him that a re-examination of documentary is overdue. And this might conceivably begin with some consideration of the label itself. Mr. Maddison quotes Mr. William Salter's recent re-statement of the concept of documentary: "it implied real people caught in the business of living real lives". But this comment might no less justly be applied to the work of the neo-realist directors, to films such as *Umberto D.* or *Pather Panchali*. There are few contemporary documentaries more deeply concerned with "real life" than these films. The splinter groups, such as the Free Cinema movement, are hardly orthodox documentarists—but how, in 1956, is orthodox documentary to be defined? The habit of grouping together travelogue, reportage, personal impression, sponsored sales-talk—in fact, most of the prose and poetry of the cinema that cannot readily be classed as fiction—under this most general of headings is beginning to lower the value of the word itself. In considering where documentary now stands, the critic's most valuable function may be more precisely to re-define what we mean by documentary.



Mr. Maddison writes rather scathingly of our concern with what he describes as the "fiction produced by

celebrated technicians". On occasion, SIGHT AND SOUND has similarly been criticised for treating over-seriously, or condemning over-harshly, pictures which have admirably achieved their basic purpose—that of making money for their promoters by entertaining large numbers of people. But the frontiers between "art" and "entertainment", between the significant and the insignificant, cannot be so exactly laid down. The entertainment film, as we all recognise, may be good art or synthetic art; it may have no connection with art at all. But—and this is a point forcefully made by Mr. Anderson, and one which we strongly endorse—the critic is failing in his duty if he disregards the extent to which films express and influence the attitudes of their audience. Both the film and the criticism are in their way a reflection of our society: we cannot try to reject our responsibilities by contracting out.

The critic's occupational hazard is inertia. There are as many trivial novels as there are trivial films, but the novel reviewer is not required to write about them. The film critic, omnivorous by necessity, may find his palate becoming jaded, his sensibilities dulled. This is why we believe that these two controversial articles are significant; they reaffirm the importance of the cinema and the responsibility of the critic. We hope that both critics and readers will be stimulated to carry the argument further.



If SIGHT AND SOUND has come, during the past few years, to stand for certain critical values—or, to use a term which some of our correspondents seem to find sentimental, human values—this has been largely the achievement of its editor, Gavin Lambert. During the six and a half years (1949-1956) in which he edited this magazine, its reputation has kept pace with its circulation. If an editor's record is judged in terms of readership figures, it can be said that SIGHT AND SOUND now has more than five times the number of readers that it had in 1949. If some of these readers believe, as an occasional letter in our correspondence columns suggests, that the magazine places over-much emphasis on foreign affairs, this is because its editorial policy has always and essentially been one of discovery. Gavin Lambert was an adventurous editor as well as a discriminating one, a disciplined writer who retained the tough-minded individuality that is part of the legacy left by *Sequence*. SIGHT AND SOUND has reflected his enthusiasms—for the cinema and for good writing—and it is by these enthusiasms that its standards have been determined.

Gavin Lambert, who resigned from the British Film Institute last March, has now left this country for the wilder shores of Hollywood, where he has been working as personal assistant to Nicholas Ray. We wish our ex-editor notably well, and we are glad that he will still be an occasional contributor to these pages.



"The Wrong Man": Henry Fonda and Esther Minciotti in a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's new film. Shot largely on location in New York, this is a melodrama based on a true story.

In the Picture

Soviet Notes

LESLIE HARDCASTLE writes: Several writers have recently commented in *SIGHT AND SOUND* on the notable changes within the Soviet film industry, the trend towards films more intimately concerned with human relations and problems. With these comments in mind, I arrived in Moscow on a three week visit, primarily to discuss the possibilities of a British film season in Moscow comparable to the National Film Theatre's recent Soviet season. I travelled with a mixed delegation, whose varied interests brought us into contact with different aspects of Soviet society. I was also able to visit the Mosfilm and Lenfilm Studios and to talk with creative workers and technicians.

Conversation with them confirmed the view that since Mikhail Romm's article in *Iskusstvo Kino*, criticising the manner in which Soviet production was then controlled, many restrictions have been lifted. Two of the main studios are now under the control of leading film-makers—Vassiliev at Lenfilm and Pyriev at Mosfilm.

In each studio an Artistic Council, made up of creative workers, is now responsible for choice of subjects and methods of production. The main story source is the script department: two-thirds are originals, the rest usually adaptations from literature or the stage. Directors can also submit subjects of their own choice, as in the case of Youtkevich's *Othello*.

The attack on the Stalin regime has undoubtedly had a profound effect; and creative workers now seem to feel that the stern bureaucratic controls are being relaxed and that wider opportunities exist for artistic expression. When I asked if there was any intention of making an anti-Stalin film, the reply was that although no specific subject was envisaged, the happenings of recent years were bound to be reflected in future undertakings. The fact that *The Battle of Stalingrad* is to be remade, this time with the real hero—the ordinary Soviet soldier—as its central figure, seems aptly to reflect the changing attitude.

Another indication of this new spirit was to be found in the antics of a comedian (remarkably like Danny Kaye) who, in a Moscow music-hall, ruthlessly mimicked the stereotyped characters found in screen biographies of recent years. One point made in defence of these biographical subjects is that during the immediate post-war years, when production was difficult, the Ministry of Culture chose only subjects which encompassed the achievements of the whole nation, as reflected in the lives of national heroes.

Shortage of studio facilities presented a very real problem after the war. Lenfilm Studios were badly damaged during the 900-day siege, and the present studio buildings (formerly a skating-rink, music-hall and market) are still somewhat under-equipped. Lenfilm is proud of its fine tradition, built up since its inauguration in 1924. Moskvint, one of Eisenstein's cameramen, still works there, as does Ivanovsky, who at 70 years of age is considered the Dean of Soviet cinema. Vassiliev himself is at present preparing a new

subject commemorating the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution; thirteen other films are also in production.

New studios are being constructed both in Leningrad and Moscow. Mosfilm Studios are larger and better equipped, and will have increased facilities when the new buildings are completed in 1957. Films now in production include three in CinemaScope. The general opinion is that the new screen sizes will not be universally adopted, and that CinemaScope will be used only if the subject demands it.

Soviet studios work along competitive lines. They sell their products to the Board of Film Release, who automatically pay the original budget plus a percentage according to the success of the film. Directors receive a fixed salary and, with other members of the unit, are given a bonus if the film does well. The script-writer receives additional royalties if more copies have to be made above an agreed number. All creative workers are members of the same union, which plays an active part in studio organisation.

The training of new technicians and directors is one of the Soviet industry's major achievements. Already the work of Samsonov is known, and Basov, Vengerov, Naunov, Yegorov and Shveitser are other names among the younger talent. Most of these are graduates of the Moscow Institute of Cinematography, and in the studios they receive further training through working under the direction of experienced film-makers. One of my most impressive memories of this visit was the emphasis placed on the education of the younger generation. I believe that this generation will demand and build for themselves a higher standard of living, and will maintain their artistic traditions. Given a greater measure of freedom, the Soviet cinema can recapture, in a new and more personal way, some of the grandeur of its early days.

"Time Without Pity"

JOHN CUTTS writes: Nowadays in London, one has grown almost accustomed to meeting film units on location. Even so, on a casual visit to an acquaintance at work in the busy newsroom of a national newspaper, I was surprised to find positioned between the desks, and the still working sub-editors and copy boys, a full camera unit shooting background scenes for *Time Without Pity*, together with actors Michael Redgrave and Leo McKern and the film's American director, Joseph Losey. During a break in the shooting, I was able to talk to Losey about films.

Made for Harlequin Productions, a company launched by documentary makers Leon Clore, Anthony Simmons (*Bow Bells, Sunday by the Sea*) and John Arnold, *Time Without Pity* will give Losey his first screen credit on a feature film since his arrival in this country five years ago. He has, however, worked on several British pictures in a "supervisory" capacity, as well as directing a short story film, *Man on the Beach*, and producing two plays, *The Wooden Dish* and *The Night of the Ball*, for the London stage.

Losey first came to the attention of critics through his work on the American Federal Theatre's *Living Newspaper*, and later graduated to feature direction via documentaries which included an Academy Award winner, *Gun in His Hand*, for M-G-M's *Crime Doesn't Pay* series. His first feature was *The Boy with Green Hair*, a well-meaning but tenuous anti-war fantasy; his best known films are probably *The Prowler*, *The Dividing Line* and *M*, the American remake of Fritz Lang's classic. Asked to describe *Time Without Pity*, Losey said: "Well, it's a drama concerning, although not wholly taken up with, an anti-capital punishment theme. Very much an interior film in mood, although we have some location shooting to do on it". I later learned that the story has been very freely adapted from an Emlyn Williams play, *Someone Waiting*, with the plot and characterisation broadened for the screen.

Talking about *M*, I mentioned that the film, when shown in this country, had been made almost incomprehensible by drastic cutting. Losey replied, "Even in America we were working against censorship problems, particularly in regard to the psychology of the murderer. The Breen Office passed the script on the grounds that it was to be a remake of a screen classic, but every time we attempted to condition the plot to the shift in time and locale, we received a warning note from the censor!" I asked Losey whether Lang had ever been approached to direct the new version. Losey answered, "I believe Seymour Nebenzal, the producer, did ask him, but Lang was not interested". (Nebenzal, incidentally, produced both versions of *M*.) "It was Nebenzal's idea, by the way, to cast David Wayne for the child killer, and I must say that his

performance was the finest I have ever got from an actor. I wish you could have seen it in its complete form".

An assistant announced that the camera was now ready, and Losey moved forward to start the scene again. Watching him in action, I was glad to see a director of his calibre profitably at work once more.

The "Permanent" Cinema

JOHN GILLET writes: The importance of the "permanent" cinema (in other words, films of artistic value which authentically reflect the national characteristics of their producing countries) was stressed by Edgar Anstey and Thorold Dickinson, the chairman and principal speaker respectively, at an informal meeting arranged by the A.C.T. in July as a follow-up to the Paris Conference organised by the French Association of Film Authors. This London meeting, to which members of the Screenwriters Association and other interested bodies were invited, provided an open forum for discussion on the resolutions passed at the Conference (which were fully reported in the last number of *SIGHT AND SOUND*). Mr. Dickinson gave a general resumé of the Paris proceedings, elaborating on points of special interest to the international body of film-makers who attended.

Censorship and mutilation of films had been fiercely denounced by the Paris delegates, notably those from Latin American countries where censorship was almost entirely political. Jean Renoir and Michael Cacoyannis were also indignant over the cuts made in their recent films when distributed overseas; the conference had included a resolution condemning this practice in their final recommendations. One of the most significant developments in the post-war cinema was the emergence of new directors and struggling young industries all over the world. Mr. Dickinson recalled the statements of some of these film-makers from countries dominated by foreign (in many cases, American) film interests. The work they wished to produce—summed up by Zavattini in his phrase "films of value to mankind"—must be guaranteed a screening if the "permanent" cinema was to survive and prosper.

The proposal of the International Federation of Film Authors (prompted by some recent French legislation) that the three main creative talents—the director, writer and composer—should share the authorship of films and thus participate directly in their royalties, gave rise to considerable discussion. Edgar Anstey, commenting on the problems arising from this scheme, suggested that perhaps their first need was to develop the idea among the three groups that they were, in fact, truly responsible for the creative quality of the finished work. The financial consequences could then follow logically; but this would be a long-term matter.



Joseph Losey during the shooting of "Time Without Pity."



"Un Condamné à Mort Est Echappé". For his new film, about an escape attempt by a prisoner of war, Robert Bresson has used an entirely non-professional cast. He prefers, in fact, that his players should remain anonymous. Above: Bresson rehearsing a scene; below, the unknown actor who takes the leading part.

Documentary Merger

An interesting new phase in the development of British documentary is suggested by the recent announcement that Anvil Films, the company formed on the initiative of Ken Cameron after the Crown Film Unit was disbanded in 1952, has acquired a controlling interest in the Realist Film Unit, Basil Wright's old company, which will shortly celebrate its 20th anniversary. According to Mr. Wright, the new agreement strengthens an existing working association; production plans will be jointly discussed but independently carried out, promising young talent will be encouraged and experimental work undertaken.

This new group—the companies in association comprise Anvil Films, Anvil Films (Scotland), Realist and World Mirror Productions (a subsidiary of Anvil)—brings together directors and technicians who belong to the pioneering years of documentary in Britain. For example, Ken Cameron (formerly sound supervisor for Crown), who worked with Cavalcanti and Jennings, and Basil Wright, who served his apprenticeship with Flaherty and Grierson, were both associated with the old G.P.O. Film Unit.

The productions undertaken by the individual companies for various sponsors cover a wide range of subjects: *Mirror in the Sky*, about Sir Edward Appleton's researches into the Ionosphere, is being made by Alex Strasser for Realist (the unit has also recently completed a colour film for the Arts Council directed by Basil Wright entitled *The Stained Glass at Fairford*, a children's feature by John Durst and a film for the W.H.O.); Anvil Films' *Trooping the Colour*, directed by Richard Warren in Technicolor, is nearing completion; and a feature film for the Children's Film Foundation about the Scottish Highlands is being produced by Ralph May (who supervised Crown productions for three years) and directed by Kay Mander for Anvil Films (Scotland).

Spanish Notes

FRANCISCO ARANDA writes: Despite the invasion of many foreign directors and actors, including Stanley Kramer and Sophia Loren, and a spate of ambitious co-productions, the most interesting new Spanish films are those of J. A. Bardem and Luis G. Berlanga, both of which were entered for the Venice Festival. Bardem's *Calle Mayor* (Main Street), starring Betsy Blair, concerns a schoolteacher struggling against the stultifying conventions of provincial life. Most of the film was shot in the town of Logroño. Once again it seems that Bardem has invested a melodrama with much social comment and a genuine sense of *milieu*.

Berlanga completed his *Calabuch* at the beginning of August.

His screenplay *Familia Provisional*, written in 1951, is now being made by Rovira Beleta, another promising young director. It describes the delicate psychological problems created shortly after the war by the arrival in Spain of children from the war-torn European countries. Although the subject sounds a little outdated, the treatment may produce interesting results. Berlanga himself recently began shooting in Alhama another script written some time ago: *El Milagro* (The Miracle). Set in a small village once famous for its mineral springs but now poor and derelict, it describes how three prominent citizens endeavour to resolve their financial problems by inventing a "small" miracle. But the miracle in fact becomes "real" and the faith of the people is upheld.

Work in Progress

U.S.A.

John Ford: *The Last Hurrah*, from Edwin O'Connor's novel about the career of a political boss. With James Cagney and Jack Lemmon.

Richard Quine: *Full of Life*, a domestic comedy with Judy Holliday and Richard Conte.

Edward Dmytryk: *Raintree Country*, from the novel by Ross Lockridge. With Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, Eva Marie Saint. (The first film in M-G-M's new 65 mm. process)

Billy Wilder: *Witness for the Prosecution*, from the Agatha Christie play.

Joseph Anthony: *The Rainmaker*, adapted from the play by Richard Nash, with Katharine Hepburn, Burt Lancaster.

Great Britain

Charles Crichton: *Lucky Jim*, adapted by Patrick Campbell from the novel by Kingsley Amis. With Ian Carmichael.

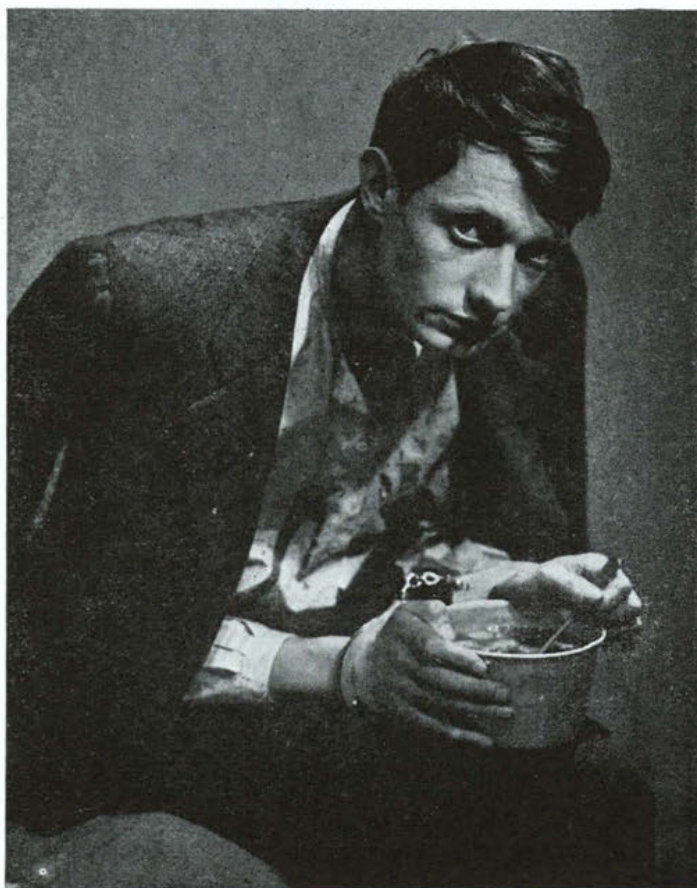
J. Lee Thompson: *The Good Companions*, a musical version of the J. B. Priestley novel. With Eric Portman, Celia Johnson, Janette Scott. (CinemaScope: Eastman Colour).

David Miller: *The Story of Esther Costello*, from the novel by Nicholas Monsarrat, with Joan Crawford and Rosanno Brazzi.

Michael Anderson: *Yangtze Incident*, the story of the *Amethyst's* adventures. With Richard Todd as Commander Kerans.

India

Satyajit Ray: *Aprajit*, a sequel to *Pather Panchali*.



Stand up! Stand up!

by LINDSAY ANDERSON

IT is much easier to write reviews of films than to formulate the principles from which such reviews should be written. And nowadays, when we are all nervous of fundamentals, it is comparatively easy to get away with critical writing that is vaguely based on the accepted standards of the time. See what the artist is trying to do: estimate the success of his attempt: relate the whole thing loosely to the commonplace assumptions of contemporary "liberal" feeling. This, I suppose, sums up the critical method of most of us, with emphasis falling rather heavily on the words "loosely", "commonplace" and "assumptions". But at last the time comes when such a method seems insufficient, and we feel the need to examine the problems more closely. I am grateful to Mr. J. R. Taylor for the letter which is printed in the Correspondence columns of this issue, and which I have been invited to answer here: his objections reinforce the feeling I already have that this examination is overdue—in the case of film criticism no less than in the fields of Mr. Newman and Mr. Trilling.

I am happy that Mr. Taylor should have sensed an "implicit standard of judgment" in my writing on films, even if he is made suspicious by the fact. But many of his deductions from my assumed partiality for the "simple, warm and human" hardly seem to follow. When an inexpressive, conventional pseudo-style is generally in favour, with all the emphasis on technical display, one may very well develop a "weakness for the just-competent and the unpolished". But of course it still depends *what* is unpolished. This in no way involves a "distrust of films which demand a sophisticated and civilised response". And I have yet to meet Mr. Taylor's "committed" critic who thinks that a newsreel is "the height of cinematic art". (He sounds a simple-minded sort of chap).

It is beginning to dawn upon us all that what is needed most today is a criticism of criticism . . . For it is the critic, rather than the work of art, who should be put for a while upon the dissecting table.—ERNEST NEWMAN

It has for some time seemed to me that a criticism which has at heart the interest of liberalism might find its most useful work not in confirming liberalism in its sense of general rightness, but rather in putting under some degree of pressure the liberal ideas and assumptions of the present time.—LIONEL TRILLING in "The Liberal Imagination"

Stand up, stand up for Jesus!—GEORGE DUFFIELD

But in raising this issue of commitment, Mr. Taylor is certainly on to something. Some confusions persist: it is untrue that a committed critic necessarily ends up despising style and becoming an inverted aesthetic snob. On the other hand a critic's moral or social convictions *may* lead him to reject work that is found entertaining by people who do not share them. This proves nothing. The essence of the matter is in the importance we attach to our principles, and the extent to which we think they are relevant to our enjoyment of art. Mr. Taylor's position here is entirely clear. He believes that we can ask no more than that an artist's work be "a true reflection of a point of view"—without regard to what that point of view may be. "Moral judgments should be presented as what they are—personal, subjective tastes".

In this sentence I think Mr. Taylor expresses, or at least reflects, the majority view at the moment. It is a view to which I am absolutely opposed, and which I think must be opposed. It is with this aspect of criticism, therefore, that I shall concern myself in this essay—it being understood (I hope) that I am not thereby dismissing "aesthetic" problems. Style is important also (only not exclusively); and in the best art, anyway, style and commitment are inseparable.

2

Instead of starting with any theoretical discussion about the nature of criticism, it may be useful to clear the ground by considering some aspects of its practice at the moment. What basic assumptions, what attitudes do we find common in the writing of present day critics? A first important point is that the cinema has at least achieved respectability.

Thirty years ago it was only a minority who took films seriously: but in their seriousness was passion. They had

the inspiration of knowing they were pioneers. The founders and members of the Film Society, the writers and readers of *Close-Up*—these revered the cinema and were burningly aware of its possibilities. It was stimulating rather than discouraging to them that the general attitude of the cultured was contemptuous and undiscerning: names like Griffith, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Gance, Flaherty and Pabst were good enough to fight for. Today you might imagine that the fight had been won. We already have our National Film Theatre, while the National Theatre remains merely a broken promise; the health of the British film industry is discussed frequently, and with concern, in the House of Commons; and the posh papers (to borrow John Osborne's useful phrase) devote space to it, send representatives to its festivals, and honour its golden jubilee with ambitious exhibitions. Yet this wider acceptance seems only to have been won at the price of diluting that original enthusiasm: a great deal of the old seriousness has been lost. It could even be maintained that the significance of the cinema—or rather the acknowledgment of its significance—has actually been reduced. It is of course inevitable that the majority of films made for popular entertainment in a capitalist society, where the general educational level is low and popular culture increasingly corrupt, should be of poor artistic quality; nor is it surprising if people whose only experience of the cinema is through such films form a low opinion of it. What is surprising, however, and perhaps significant as well, is a tendency among critics—that is to say among the articulate representatives of the educated minority—to subscribe to this opinion themselves, and even to encourage it.

A particularly striking example of this tendency is the habit of certain writers—and they seem to be growing more rather than less—of turning on the cinema and declaring that it is “not an art”. Now I do not intend to pursue this as a serious argument; I simply want to draw attention to the phenomenon of its repeated expression. The classic instance, I suppose, appeared in Miss C. A. Lejeune's column in the *Observer* just nine years ago; and it is worth quoting as the openly professed philosophy of a critic who occupies a leading position in her profession. The article was headed “Taking the Plunge”.

A few weeks ago I hinted that I was on the brink of giving up the pretence that films were an art, and settling for the conviction that “most of them are just vulgar and illiterate rubbish, and the rest are good entertainment provided for the relaxation of people whose brains are not at the moment up to anything tougher”. At the time of writing I was not prepared to take the full plunge. Today I am. Today I am ready to declare categorically that films are not an art; and I feel very much the better for it . . .

. . . It is not within the power of electrical engineering or mechanical contraption to create. They can only reproduce. And what they reproduce is not art . . .

In case I may be judged unfair in quoting an article printed in 1947, I should add that Miss Lejeune has given us evidence that her views remain the same. In fact when this year her newspaper backed an exhibition of “Sixty Years of Cinema”, her contribution to the catalogue included the statement: “Too much highflown nonsense is talked about art and culture in relation to films”. (She went on to advise her readers: “Cherish the little things: a dance, a tune, a face, a movement of water, a ripple in the corn . . .”.)

Miss Lejeune is not alone in taking this attitude. To a remarkable extent, in fact, denigration of the cinema, denial of its importance and its significance, has become common among those who write about it professionally. Consider

the tone of a recent column of criticism in the *Sunday Times* by Mr. Kenneth Pearson.

Some people consider the film as an art. Others less daring, like myself, would classify it as a craft, capable, on rare occasions, of producing a work of some significance . . .

It is not as if Mr. Pearson were here initiating a real discussion: he is simply leading in to a review of *Trapeze*. What is significant is that such sentiments should be felt to provide an acceptable journalistic opening to a column of cultured film criticism. Mr. Pearson can only write like this because he senses that it is safely fashionable to do so.

Exactly the same fashion is reflected in a recent notice (of *The Rains of Ranchipur*), from *The Times*.

This is the cinema as the cinema should rightly be, not concerned with the psychology of drug addicts and prostitutes, but, in its choice of subject and treatment, warm, vague, extravagant and sentimental.

To reserve your enthusiasm for the more meretricious productions of the cinema is only another way of denying its claim to the same attention as literature, music, painting or any other of the arts. (It is impossible, for instance, to imagine a reputable dramatic critic writing in this way.) But what is the reason for such denial? Is it to be ascribed to simple, good-old-English Philistinism? It is difficult to know what other term to apply to the following observation by the critic of the *Observer*:

I have never understood the taste for violence and squalor in the cinema. We know that dreadful things go on all around us; we know that life is grim and we deplore it; but I can see no merit in bringing the misery into our recreation.

The simple term “Philistinism” is not however quite enough. For this is a word that can cover a number of attitudes. It can be impatient and actionful, like Goering reaching for his revolver—and there are times, when culture has become snobbish and claustrophobic, when this may be useful. (One can remember the occasion—and how long ago it seems—when even Sir Herbert Read was driven to cry “To Hell with Culture!”). But there is another kind of philistinism, timorous rather than pugnacious, which shrinks from art because art presents a challenge. This can be an even more insidious enemy, because it often disguises itself with the apparatus of culture, professing the very values which it is in the act of destroying. “Do not misunderstand me, please”, writes Miss Lejeune, having just declared that a film is nothing but “bits of celluloid and wire”, “I am not intending to belittle the screen”. And I do not suppose that this is the conscious intention of the other critics I have quoted, either. But it is what they are doing.

3

It was a fine day, and I must have been three or four, when Nanny popped me into a charabanc and took me off to Blackpool to see my first film . . .

Such were the opening words of the introduction, by Mr. Richard Buckle, of the catalogue to the *Observer's* recent exhibition, “Sixty Years of Cinema”. By the time this essay appears, the exhibition will have closed; and perhaps it may be thought that it would be better to let the whole business slide into oblivion. If I disagree, it is not for the pleasure of being wise after the event, but because “Sixty Years of Cinema” was an event of great (if unhappy) significance, and closely relevant to my theme. Here was an ambitious exhibition, visited by well over 200,000 people, backed with all the prestige of a great liberal newspaper, and sponsored

as well by the British Film Institute and the Cinémathèque Française. The idea of the cinema expressed in it is therefore of considerable importance, both for its direct impression on all those virgin minds (innocent of any previous experience of the mysteries of film appreciation), and for the evidence it provides of the satisfactions sought today by enlightened people from the art of the film.

After some reminiscences of his early film-going days, ("The Babylonian orgy in *Intolerance* set a standard for parties which I have aspired to ever since . . ."), Mr. Buckle continued his introduction as follows:

The pleasure many people said they had from the Diaghilev Exhibition, which I drifted into organising almost by accident, made me think that here and now we might invent a new kind of exhibition, a show where people had fun (whether they wanted instruction or not), and were carried out of themselves, as they are in the theatre. By a happy chance the editor of the "Observer" is as eager as I am to give opportunities to artists, and fun to people in general.

Of particular interest here is the careful profession of amateurism. "The Diaghilev Exhibition, which I drifted into organising almost by accident . . ." Thus Mr. Buckle avoids from the start any possible accusation of being over-serious: the implied assumption is that if you are serious, you are probably also boring. It is no coincidence that the word "fun" appears twice before the end of the paragraph. Just as, in this context, words like "instruction", "culture" even "art" acquire connotations of pretentiousness and gloomy didacticism, so the idea of pleasure dwindles into that of "fun". But what a pinched, jejune notion of pleasure this is, that exercises only the most superficial faculties, and affects a kind of modish infantilism to justify its retreat from the responsibilities of being an adult.

Granted this basic attitude, it was inevitable that the exhibition should take the form it did: an orthodox, un-adventurous choice of stills, selected on conventional academic and chronological principles, disposed in a series of sophisticated decors, which tended to 'kill' rather than to set off the material on display. A detailed criticism of the exhibition would take too long, and anyway be out of place: a few instances should suffice to convey the general effect. Thus, the American cinema of the 'twenties was represented by (I quote from the catalogue) "an amusing photomontage of Hollywood stars at home, seen through the arches of a Spanish-colonial colonnade". Somewhat naturally, the diminutive stills from *Greed*, *The Big Parade*, and perhaps *Sunrise* and *A Woman of Paris*, set against this background, told nothing of the creative achievements of the early American cinema, beyond the fact that the actors in it wore old-fashioned costumes. In the rooms that followed, rows of stills from German, Russian and French films similarly expressed nothing of what those cinemas represent, either in human or aesthetic terms. The British room was got up in a picturesque dock-side setting (the sort of urban, working-class decor that is rarely featured in British story-films), and in the haphazard selection of stills, displayed as though the work of pavement artists (!), no distinction was made as to genre, purpose, or quality. The early days of American sound films were symbolised by a huge perspective model of the New York skyline; while Hollywood production of the last twenty years was represented by further batches of stills lost in a mannered, painter's impression of the United States. ("Mr. Leonard Rosoman," wrote Mr. Buckle, "who has never been to America, has conjured up . . . a flowing pageant of landscape and figures which is just my idea, anyway, of



"Sixty Years of Cinema".

what life is like in that mysterious continent").

As I have said: all this was inevitable. *Not*, however, because of the necessity to "popularise" a subject which otherwise would have been dry and inaccessible to an audience of ordinary people. To believe this is to reveal a complete misunderstanding, and a fundamental lack of sympathy towards the essential achievements of the cinema during its sixty years of life. Further it is to reject its potentialities. Nor is it simply a question of being unable to represent motion pictures satisfactorily by still photographs. That stills can be used creatively, to make a significant statement—and at the same time an attractive one—has been shown by Edward Steichen in his fine exhibition, "The Family of Man". But Mr. Steichen did not start off with Nanny, in pursuit of fun. He proved instead the deeper pleasure that can be drawn from a skilful and sincere expression of faith, of belief. Mr. Buckle, with his "Hall of Glamour", where portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Rita Hayworth confronted Tony Curtis, Alan Ladd and Lex Barker, like photographs in a Charing Cross Road outfitter's window, proved nothing except the truth of Joubert's *pensée*: "Nothing shrivels up man so much as trivial pleasure".*

Only one room in "Sixty Years of Cinema" achieved a real expressiveness, a suggestive power beyond the conscious intentions of its designers. For I do not suppose that either Mr. Buckle or Mr. John Piper intended their "Shadow Theatre" to evoke so disturbingly an atmosphere of cultural decay: if, indeed, they had consciously worked to this end, the symbolism of the *mise-en-scène* could not have been more potent. Fittingly, it was the last feature in the exhibition (after the Hall of Glamour). Passing between a powerful

* This Hall of Glamour was introduced after the exhibition had already been open for seven or eight weeks—presumably in an attempt to increase its popular appeal. Symbolically, a display of scenes from films like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Road to Life*, *Partie de Campagne* and *My Darling Clementine* had to be taken down in order to accommodate it. It was at about the same time that the exhibition posters were changed, and a new slogan adopted: "From Valentino to Dors".

projector-lamp on your left, and a white screen on your right, you found yourself in a dark, empty-seeming hall. As your eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, you became aware of twisting, gilt rococo pillars, a chequered sham-marble floor, and, round the walls, a number of recesses in which stood anonymous, decomposing statues, limbs and faces crumbled as if with age. In the middle of the floor, on a group of spindly gilt chairs, people were sitting, silent, apparently without thought or feeling, staring listlessly at the other side of that white screen behind which you passed to enter the room, and on which is thrown the silhouette of every passer-by. A slow movement from one of the watchers attracts your attention. You see that it is a woman, and that she is raising a cup to her lips. You look round, and there, in the corner, you perceive it—an Espresso Coffee Bar. It is like a scene from *L'Age d'Or*.

There is one other feature that must not be overlooked—though if your eyesight is not sharp, it very well may be. In the darkest corner of the room there is a shelf. On this rests a large book. Peering at a typewritten notice on the wall, you learn that this contains stills from the twenty-five best films ever made. But there is no light by which to see them.

4

It is a matter of fact, not of opinion, that the cinema is an art. This does not call for theoretical discussion—unless, of course, you enjoy that kind of intellectual exercise. If it is simply the truth we are after, the question has already been answered, empirically. If *L'Atalante*, *Strike*, *Rashomon* and *Louisiana Story* are not works of art, then there is no way of describing them. And if Griffith, Renoir, Jennings and de Sica are not artists, we will have to invent a new word for them.

The importance of the cinema as a cultural and propagandist force is a matter of fact also. Everyone who has seen more than half a dozen films with his eyes open knows that if the cinema does not create the significant social movements of our time, it intimately reflects them. And that it provides a reflection just as intimate—and just as significant—of social stagnation. A further point worth emphasising is that the cinema makes its appeal above all to the youthful: that is to say, above all to those whose minds are unformed, and open to impression.

These facts alone are enough to condemn the thoughtless denigration of the cinema, of which I have given a number of fashionable examples. The consistent impression created by such writing is that films provide at worst a vulgar means of escapism or wish-fulfilment (Bread-and-Circuses), and at best an amusing, rather exotic diversion ("The Arabian Nights' Entertainments of our time"). To apply to them serious standards of criticism, aesthetic or social, is to indulge in "highflown nonsense" and to prove oneself a glum, humourless and boring person.

Leaving aside for a moment the graver implications of such an attitude, we may remark that at the least it is damaging, tolerating the shoddy and the third-rate, and muffling work of importance by a flippant or purely sentimental response. It is impossible to praise things that are bad without injuring things that are good. By celebrating the merits of the trivial and the meretricious, or by being lengthily funny at its expense, we lower the prestige of the cinema, and, indirectly, make it more difficult for anybody to make a good film.

Granted, however, that this is not the way to write about the cinema, the basic critical problems still remain. And

amongst them—most urgently perhaps—the one which has precipitated this essay. To what extent must we aspire to objectivity, like a sensitive but impersonal reagent; and to what extent must we involve our own convictions, moral as well as aesthetic, social as well as moral? "Sixty Years of Cinema" was a perfect example of the attitude which rejects any such notion of involvement, in favour of an academic objectivity, lightened with decorative touches and a few, purely frivolous, personal indulgences. In this it reflected current fashion with complete fidelity (at least I can call to mind no criticism levelled at the exhibition for lack of conception or point of view). So widely accepted, in fact, is this approach, so literally does it go without saying, that it is difficult to find any explicit statement of the "uncommitted" position. Some twenty years ago, however, there was a declaration by Alastair Cooke which so exactly performs this function that it is still relevant today. It is a "Critic's Testament", delivered by Mr. Cooke when he started reviewing films for the B.B.C., in 1935.

As a critic I am without politics and without class. For a film hero I am prepared to take John Barrymore, George Robey, a Battleship, Mickey Mouse, or an Italian Straw Hat. I hope that everyone who wants to make a lot of money in films will make it, that every girl who aches to become a star overnight will become one . . . My malice extends only to those who have a dull talent . . .

Mr. Cooke was aware that he might run up against certain problems as a film critic. "A month ago I had an earnest letter asking me rather gravely what I was going to do about politics . . . Even in the story-film . . . there is constantly an implication it is impossible to overlook. I mean a political, a social one". These implications, however, (although "impossible to overlook"), he refused to face. "As a critic I have no politics". The rejection of moral as well as social responsibilities was absolutely specific:

However much I want in private to rage or protest or moralise, these actions [i.e., war films, etc.] have nothing to do with critics. As a moralist I could be shocked. As an educationalist I might lament that the subject was not elevating. As a business man I might feel glum that the seduction was clumsy and therefore bad box-office. But I am not a moralist, an educator, a business man. I am merely a critic and I have to try and decide whether Miss Harlow's smiles and pouts were performed expertly enough to entice Mr. Gable away . . . So if a film comes from Elstree and is full of propaganda for, let's say, social slavery, it is not for me to say that such propaganda is socially shocking.

It is fascinating to find Mr Cooke, in 1935, expressing both the essential attitude and the characteristic tone of a number of critics today. There is the claim to a liberal standpoint, "without politics and without class", that tolerantly estimates every work on its own merits. Immediately, however, the liberalism is negated by a sort of facetious self-parody: "I hope that everyone who wants to make a lot of money in films will make it . . ." Taken seriously, this would imply abandonment of any standards at all. But of course its purpose is exactly to ensure that the writer is *not* taken seriously; to prove that he does not take himself too seriously either. Scorn of "highbrow nonsense about art and culture" is only round the corner from here, and so is the pursuit of "fun". It is the "dull" talent that the critic really disapproves of: he wants to be entertained.

The problems of commitment are directly stated, but only apparently faced. From the first, the question is begged by the use of phrases which make Mr. Cooke's correspondent seem just an old fuddy-duddy—"an earnest letter", "rather gravely" . . . The denial of the critic's moral responsibility

is specific; but only at the cost of sacrificing his dignity. "I am merely a critic". And facetiousness lends its defensive aid once more with the joke about Miss Harlow's smiles and pouts. The instance of a propagandist film for "social slavery" from Elstree is similarly dishonest: the case of an anti-semitic film from Nazi Germany would have been more awkward.

The examples of criticism I have quoted in the foregoing pages all derive from assumptions similar to these: the holding of liberal, or humane values; the proviso that these must not be taken too far; the adoption of a tone which enables the writer to evade through humour. The fundamental issues are baulked. Just as Mr. Cooke uses an example which he knows his audience will think absurd, Mr. Taylor in his letter demands fair treatment for a film "glorifying the good side of war". (It is the film that glorifies the bad side of war that presents him with a challenge.) It is true that Mr. Taylor presents the slightly different case of the critic who has a further reason for rejecting moral issues as irrelevant—in favour of what he calls a "non-partisan aesthetic judgment". In other words, he believes that a critic's function must be restricted to an examination of the aesthetic form of the film under discussion.

I hope I will be pardoned if I say that I find this distinction between form and content somewhat naïf. It is the essence of poetry (in any medium) that the thing said cannot be critically distinguished from the way of saying it. Perhaps we see here the pernicious influence of a school of "Film Appreciation" which analyses every film according to certain textbook conceptions of technique, and which is as insensitive to meaning as it is to subtleties of individual style. In fact, since these aesthetic principles are never precisely formulated, and since close analysis of statement or implication is considered irrelevant, criticism has no alternative but to fall back on an entirely subjective kind of "impressionism". Hence the extreme over-use of terms like "moving", "deeply moving", "strangely unmoving", etc. Particularly striking in this connection is a recent pronouncement of critical method by Kenneth Tynan, the best of our contemporary theatre critics. "What counts", says Mr. Tynan, "is not their [i.e., theatre critics'] opinion, but the art with which it is expressed . . . The subtlest and best-informed of men will still be a bad critic if his style is bad. It is irrelevant whether his opinion is 'right' or 'wrong' . . ." In other words, in criticism as in art, it is showmanship that counts.

Effect, then, is more important than meaning. From this position it is only a step to a conception of art that actually rejects significance. Some time ago an article of mine was published in *SIGHT AND SOUND* which closely examined the social implications of *On the Waterfront*. I was amazed, not by the number of people who disagreed with me, but by the number of people who thought that this sort of thing was somehow *beyond the function of criticism*. Most significant was a comment on the article which appeared in *The Times*:

Films are the folk-lore, the character and aspirations of the nations made visible, yet it would be unwise to search too keenly in every scene of boy-meets-girl for political or any other symbolism . . . People like Mr. Anderson perform a valuable service when they draw attention to hidden significances and covert propaganda, but the normal person will go on regarding the screen with the unseeing gaze Watson fixed on the bowler—and perhaps be none the worse for it.

Analytical criticism, it is here implied, is unwise, abnormal—even when it exposes covert propaganda. The logically following epithet, I fear, is "subversive".



"The voice that cries out . . ." A scene from the English Stage Company's production of "Look Back in Anger" (Kenneth Haigh, Mary Ure and Alan Bates). Photograph by Julie Hamilton.

5

It is over ten years now since we (the junior officers) nailed a red flag to the roof of the mess at the foot of Annan Parbat, to celebrate the glorious news from home. (I mean of course the result of the 1945 election.) The colonel did not approve, but even he seemed to feel that a new era might be upon us; and no disciplinary action was taken.

It is also over ten years since Humphrey Jennings, in a film made for the British government, linked the lives of a farmer and an engine driver, an R.A.F. pilot, a coal miner, and a baby called Timothy. It is as beautiful a film today as it was then, but it has gained sadness; for the questions it asked about the future do not seem to be getting the hoped-for answers. From one point of view this is paradoxical. We have had our social revolution: we have a fine system of social security: and our technological achievements are something to be proud of. How then to explain the prevalence of cynicism, the baffled idealism and the emotional fatigue? Why are so many young voices resentful and defeatist rather than pugnacious and affirming?

I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the 'thirties and 'forties, when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left. If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus . . .

Most critics have attempted to write off John Osborne's

hero (this is a quotation from *Look Back in Anger*) as a negligible, bad-mannered young bounder, "racked with uncertainty and rotten with self-pity". Predictably, they have shirked the task of analysing his boulderishness: the writer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, from whom I have taken this comment, can find no virtue either in Jimmy Porter or the play, even though he admits that "there is something about this nagging young man which audiences recognise as giving him some vital connection with the social system". As to what this "something" is, we are not enlightened; characteristically this is the end, not the beginning, of the examination of the play.

In so far as Jimmy Porter's grievances are social at all (and it should be realised that the play is primarily the study of a temperament), they are not material grievances. The young people who respond so unmistakably to *Look Back in Anger* are responding to its outspoken attacks on certain venerable sacred cows, and also to its bitter impatience with the moral vacuum in which, they feel, public life, and cultural life, is today being conducted. The class resentment is only part of it. If there "aren't any good, brave causes left" (or if that is the feeling in the air), the fault is not so much that of the Right, the Tory element in politics and art, as of the Left, the progressives, the liberals in the broadest sense of that long-suffering word. The manner in which the British political Left has muffed its chance to capture the imagination and allegiance of the nation is too obvious to need dwelling on: from the peaceful revolution of '45 to "You Can Trust Mr. Attlee", and Mr. Gaitskell in pin-strip trousers helping with the family washing-up, the descent has been sure, steady and well-publicised. Less easily—or at least less often—remarked has been the steady draining away of vitality from what we may call the cultural left, its increasing modishness, and its more and more marked aversion from emotional simplicity or moral commitment.

"We are all existentialists nowadays, at least in the same vague, popular sense that it was ever true to say we were all socialists . . ." This is the prevailing tone—over-allusive, fatigued, intellectually snobbish—of the *New Statesman* intellectual of today; while the indefatigable Mr. Kingsley Martin, on the front page, continues to chastise the Labour Party for its lack of realism, and to warn it that it may "drift further and further away from the realities of working-class life".* We cannot but smile at such wild discrepancies, but really this sort of thing is sad rather than funny; and particularly because, of the two remarks, it is the second that is outdated. (The contemporary liberal intellectual is far less diverted by the realities of working-class life than by the variations between "U" and "Non-U" usage.)

A particularly pregnant example of the kind of debilitation I am describing is offered by the recent (August 18, 1956) review in the *New Statesman* of the "Family of Man" exhibition. "What strikes one most" writes Mr. John Raymond "about this amazing cross-section of men and women, is its unity—a unity of fear". Affirmation and the pursuit of happiness (which are the theme of the exhibition) being out of fashion, Mr. Raymond stands to make a distinctly smarter impression if he jettisons Mr. Steichen's statement, and substitutes something more up-to-the-minute of his own. The crucial passage in this argument so perfectly crystallises its pseudo-liberal attitude that readers must bear with me while I quote it in full.

What is Mr. Steichen's message? 'All men are created equal'; 'No man is an island entire of himself'; 'Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision'; 'We must love one another or die'? Judging by the Bomb that ends the whole affair, Auden's discarded line appears to be the text that the sponsors are bent on

hammering home. If only Timbuctoo can learn to love Old Trafford, the lion will lie down with the lamb, our bombs can be beaten into atomic ploughshares and Walt Whitman's "new city of friends" can be turned into a reality. Such a jejune motif does poor justice to the riches of this collection, even when eked out by the trite international maxims that stud the walls—"The world of man dances in laughter and tears" (Kabir); "Clasp the hands and know the thoughts of men in other lands" (Masefield); "Eat bread and salt and speak the truth" (Russia) . . .

Such accomplished perversity demands analysis if its subtleties are to be fully appreciated. Confronted by the tremendous issues raised by this exhibition, the enlightened Mr. Raymond is at no loss for a protective shield of sophisticated cross-references. His piece is headed "All The Conspirators"—a quotation from *Julius Caesar* which is wholly inapposite, but has the merit of connoting Shakespeare and (more important) the first novel of Christopher Isherwood. The reference to Auden settles us even more firmly within the charmed circle: this gospel is limited not just to the (comparatively large) number of people who can pick out Auden's line from the group of quotations listed at the beginning of the paragraph, but to the selecter elite who are aware that Auden has omitted the line from the latest edition of his short poems. His position of cultural superiority thus established—Walt Whitman is another O.K. reference, and may safely be patronised—Mr. Raymond can proceed confidently to dismiss as a "jejune motif" such poetic conceptions as the lion lying down with the lamb; the sword beaten into the ploughshare; and Whitman's "New city of friends". This is the point where the hard work of writing a criticism of the exhibition is smoothly side-stepped; instead of pointing out where Mr. Steichen fails to measure up poetically to the texts he has chosen, Raymond dismisses the texts themselves, and with them an aspiration which has long found a place in the hearts of men, and still does today. The slickness with which this dismissal is effected is alarming, because it shows Raymond's sense that he is writing with, not against the current. It needs only the word bomb with a capital 'B', and the facetious jingle of Timbuctoo and Old Trafford to discredit the positive ideal of human brotherhood which is the essential inspiration of the whole exhibition.

I have given care to an examination of this passage, not because in itself Mr. Raymond's reaction to "The Family of Man" is very important, but because of his ability skilfully to express the social and cultural attitudes of his class and time. The really shocking thing about such a piece is that nobody is shocked by it. (The only comment it aroused among readers of the *New Statesman* was a letter pointing out that a quotation from Schiller had been wrongly attributed to Goethe.) The commitments, in fact, of the liberal intellectuals are now so taken for granted that they have ceased to have any force whatever; and to speak out for them is to run the risk of appearing simple. Mr. Raymond can end his review with a pessimistic quotation from Lord Russell—"Brief and powerless is Man's life . . ."—without fear of arousing the slightest protest from the readers of a radical left-wing periodical. His style, though intellectually more pretentious, echoes the uncommitted Mr. Cooke twenty years before him: sceptical, amused, implicitly mistrustful of affirmation, even while continuing to pay indulgent lip-service to it.

6

Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND will probably by now be feeling that I have strayed far from my subject: indeed, if they take it for granted that "non-partisan aesthetic judgment" is the sole province of a critic, they are bound to do so. But my whole point is that criticism (film criticism included) cannot exist in a vacuum; and that writers who insist that their functions are so restricted are merely indulging in a

* Both these quotations are taken from the same issue of the *New Statesman*, December, 1955.

voluntary self-emasculation. "I am not a moralist . . ." insisted Mr. Cooke, "I am merely a critic". Why should anyone be content to be a *mere* critic? "I have little or no idea where I am going", wrote Mr. Tynan on becoming dramatic critic of the *Observer*, "... I see myself predominantly as a lock. If the key, which is the work of art, fits snugly into my mechanism of bias and preference, I click and rejoice; if not, I am helpless . . ." But one searches in vain for some basis for this critical philosophy of passivity and self-restriction. A critic has his special gift, but is he any less a man than the rest of us? The moral faculty, and the intellectual faculty are essential instruments to him. They are certainly no less important than the ability to write vivid and evocative reportage.

I have discussed quite extensively in this essay what seems to me the prevalent tone of contemporary liberal writing. I am not of course using the word "liberal" in any political sense, but rather as applied to the general humanism that makes liberals of practically all of us today (nominally at least). Everyone believes in social and artistic liberty, even if we differ about the means of achieving them; everyone believes in the importance of the individual, in freedom of speech, assembly and worship, in tolerance and mutual aid. The fact that it is almost impossible to express these beliefs except in terms of platitude does not in itself discredit them. That affirmation should have become the prerogative of politicians and blurb-writers is shameful. But this only

means that belief has to be rescued, not that it must be abandoned.

Our ideals—moral, social and poetic—must be defended, with intelligence as well as emotion; and also with intransigence. To look back (and around) in anger may be a necessary beginning: but as Jimmy Porter himself demands, "The voice that cries out doesn't have to be a weakling's, does it?" That is why I have evoked that image of the red flag over an officers' mess near Delhi—not to suggest that I necessarily see our only answer in communism. Nor does the fact that I have quoted Duffield's hymn in the title of this essay imply that I am pinning my hopes to a Christian revival. I do not believe that humanism is exhausted; nor that we are without rebels capable of defending its cause. This is a responsibility to accept. (But responsibility is not conformism.)

The cinema is not apart from all this; nor is it something to be denigrated or patronised. It is a vital and significant medium, and all of us who concern ourselves with it automatically take on an equivalent responsibility. And in so far as film criticism is being written here and now, and deals with an art intimately related to the society in which we live, it cannot escape its wider commitments. Essentially, in fact, there is no such thing as uncommitted criticism, any more than there is such a thing as insignificant art. It is merely a question of the openness with which our commitments are stated. I do not believe that we should keep quiet about them.



"Affirmation and the pursuit of happiness . . ." A photograph by Bill Brandt from the "Family of Man" exhibition arranged by Edward Steichen.



Nicholas Ray (centre) during the shooting of "Rebel Without a Cause".

Story into Script

by
NICHOLAS RAY

Nicholas Ray's book on the filming of "Rebel Without a Cause", written in collaboration with Gavin Lambert, will be published by Harpers later this year under the title "Rebel: The Life Story of a Film". We are grateful to Mr. Ray and to his publishers for permission to reprint this chapter, which has been slightly abridged here.

The title of "Rebel Without a Cause" came from the book by the late Robert M. Lindner, a pioneer of hypnotic therapy. Warners had acquired the rights to this book (it concerns the fantasies of a young delinquent as revealed under hypnosis), and suggested it as a subject to Nicholas Ray. His main interest lay, however, in finding "something that would dramatise the situation of 'normal' delinquents", and he instead proposed a story of his own. This was "The Blind Run", a brief story-outline setting out the situation and some key incidents later used in the film. Stewart Stern was finally assigned to the screenplay, after the search for a writer described here.

THE innocent public has learned much about writers and producers from the drawing room anthropologist, who arrives in Hollywood for a short visit and a series of brisk interviews and writes a book about the place with plenty of references to primitive society and the tribal unconscious. To say anything more is, perhaps, inviting confusion. Yet, though the parallels with initiation ceremonies in Polynesia may be exhausted, personal experience has still something to tell.

I have been lucky enough, in Hollywood, to work for two outstandingly good producers. "Producer" in this sense means not the executive in charge of everything that goes on at the studio, but a member of his staff delegated to supervise scripting, casting, budgeting and the general approach to an individual film. Leo Rosten, whose book *Hollywood—The Movie Colony* contains the best straightforward analysis of producers I know, remarks that movies are what the executives "encourage or allow their battery of creative talents to make of them". True enough; but this privilege ideally belongs to the director, and his task is to take it over as soon as he can in the creation of a film.

A sympathetic and imaginative producer can be enormously helpful, not only in the creative ideas he brings to a picture, but in fighting the director's battles with the "desk set" for him. He needs, of course, courage as well as imagination; and this is what makes him rare. The inept or insecure producer, unfortunately, is not so rare, and his existence formed the subject of a pamphlet by the Screen Directors' Guild a few years ago. Simply through what he cannot or will not do, he may cause much damage to a picture—by creating a climate of confusion and mistrust in which the director's relationship to his writers and technical crew, as well as to the front office, is affected.

At Warners I found another good producer. Rather to my surprise, the studio offered me a choice of any of their contract producers, and I decided on David Weisbart. He was the youngest; he had two teenage children, which made me think he would bring a personal interest to the subject; and he was also an excellent worker with the celluloid strip (a rare attribute among producers). Previously he had been a film editor, and had cut *A Streetcar Named Desire* for Kazan, who told me he had liked working with him, thought he and I would get along; and that Dave would be a contributing producer. He was.

When Dave read the outline of *The Blind Run* and listened to me talk some more about it, his first reaction was as if he had swallowed a hot potato. (Later, of course, he knew he had.) This was not surprising. To begin with, he was faced with an original story—less a story at this stage than an idea—and not the comfortable basis of an existing novel or magazine story or Broadway play. Also, the subject itself was potentially explosive.

I think he remained in a state of shock for some time. But when the story was at last taking shape and we were nearly ready to start shooting, he became passionately involved in the film. Not the least valuable thing he did for me was to accept, with patience and understanding, the two false

starts over finding a writer, and allow the search for the right one to continue.

2

Finding a writer is for many reasons more difficult than finding a producer. The producer, anyway, usually finds you. There is a traditional writer-director hostility in Hollywood, and it is a unique kind of hostility. Basically, each resents his dependence on the other. The writer needs the director for his story to be realised; the director needs the writer to give him a story in a form he can realise.

From this situation springs a good deal of misunderstanding and bitterness. The writer claims that his creative contribution is under-estimated—the director and stars nearly always receive more publicity and acclaim than he, and yet hasn't he created the characters and the story, written the dialogue and evolved the structure?

If the writer's case were as simple as this, he would be the most ill-treated professional in the film industry. Unfortunately for him, it is not. First, there are perhaps a half-dozen first-rate writers in Hollywood. Most outstanding creative writers will prefer literature or the drama, to which their contribution creates no ambiguity. The famous novelists who come to Hollywood and write a script seldom arrive with an open mind about the new medium they are exploring, and seldom learn very much about it. Nearly all of them return with an ironic, rueful image of the monstrous director or producer. The writer, they claim, is not understood.

In the same way, a few writers who have attained fame and influence in Hollywood will turn to direction in order, they claim, to preserve the integrity of their scripts. This is an admirable theory but, on the whole, a deplorable practice. To bring it off requires the exceptional talent of a John Huston or a Preston Sturges at their best. There are many writer-directors whose films are unsatisfactory precisely because they over-estimate the writer and under-estimate the director. The writer-director is much too indulgent to the writer, reluctant to cut a word of that brilliant dialogue, a sentence of that verbose scene.

The most talented Hollywood writers are those who recognise the special nature of writing for the movies and acknowledge the creative claims of the director. ("One of the functions of the director", says Gilbert Seldes in *The Movies Come From America*, "is to save us from the writer enamoured of his own wit; another is to save us from the players enamoured of their own personality; and a third is to save us from the producers . . .") This involves, sometimes, a difficult kind of abnegation for the writer, who is working in a medium in which the image and not the word has the final impact. "It was all in the script", a disillusioned writer will tell you. But it was never all in the script. If it were, why make the movie?

There is a revealing story told in this connection by the German director Fritz Lang. When he made his first Hollywood film, *Fury*, in 1935, he knew about thirty words of English. (This did not prevent him from working on the script.) The brilliant picture that emerged was considered too controversial and disturbing by a distinguished front-office executive. Irrately he summoned Lang to his office and accused him of having changed the script. Lang replied that his lack of English made this impossible; comparing the script with the finished film, he showed that not a line of dialogue nor a situation had been changed. All the same, the executive complained, the film was entirely different from the script.

Starting from an original idea, the tendency of most writers is to make it "literary", to present situation primarily in

terms of dialogue. The director has to fight against this, and the result is often to make the writer accuse him of being illiterate. There may be a scene in which a writer is especially proud of his dialogue; it may be good dialogue; but what is really needed for the scene is not good dialogue but a visual conception. And the dialogue has to go. What replaces it may seem, to the writer, banal—and here another misunderstanding can arise. Someone remarked that a fundamental tenet of Stanislavsky's system is to help an actor say "What time is it?" and mean one of maybe twenty different things—"I want to leave" or "I want to stay", "I love you" or "I hate you", "I'm worried" or "I don't care", and so on. In this sense the most apparently banal line of dialogue can achieve dramatic meaning. Out of the inner moment, the state of being and the urgent need, comes the whole accent of what is said or done. Only the director is in a position to help the actor create this effect.

If writers were able to work more closely with directors from the beginning of a film's conception, the results and the mutual understanding would improve. Most directors, when they start making films, are handed complete (though often impracticable) scripts a few days before shooting is due to start. Later, they still have to fight to work with a writer of their own choice. (Often the difficulty is that a studio likes to use one of its own contract writers, for obvious economic reasons.) This is a battle Hollywood directors have been fighting for twenty years, and it is not yet won.

The complaints are not all on one side. Studio executives work under the anxious pressure of having to account to their stockholders, and they can do this only by keeping up a regular supply of profitable product. An executive's first instinct is to oppose anything that will interrupt the supply or



"Rebel Without a Cause": Nicholas Ray with James Dean.

increase the budget. It is inconvenient and often wasteful to postpone a shooting date, to juggle with actors' commitments. Why can't the director get on with making the picture he has been signed to make?

Nobody sets out deliberately to make a bad picture, though a lot of people set out just to make a picture. The economics and the mechanisation of the system demand it. The difficulty starts when a film-maker's personal convictions interfere with the mechanisms of a business operated for profit. To object to the movies because they are "commercial" is idiotic; to accept that honesty and originality are necessarily "un-commercial" is impossible.

Yet good films somehow get made—and not, as some embittered humorists like us to believe, simply in spite of the front office. Producers, directors and writers have many misunderstandings among themselves. For the front office this is merely an additional burden to bear. It has every reason never to take a risk. Yet it does, and surprisingly often. The decision that enabled a *Grapes of Wrath*, a *Citizen Kane* or *A Place in the Sun* to be made uncompromisingly, the way their creators wanted, could not have been an easy one. And in one case at least it could not have been easy to appease the stockholders.

Production methods, then, are one factor. Another is human insecurity. In making films, creative people and businessmen and administrators have to work together. There is a hatchet of tradition to be buried. There is an intensely competitive atmosphere. Credit and fame are not only matters of personal pride but professional necessity. In the process of discarding ancient instinctive hostilities, some unexpected alliances may be formed. In the producer-director-writer triangle it is not necessarily the "artists" who form the base. To gain a point, the producer may decide to drive a wedge, and it is not difficult for him to do so; separately and secretly, writer and director may seek the producer's support in an unresolved issue.

An insecure producer tends, on principle, to keep writer and director apart—in some cases, even to the extent of refusing to allow the writer to visit the set, thereby making it virtually impossible for him to learn more about the medium.

An insecure writer always decides his first obligation is to the producer, rather than to the story or himself—except his economic self, that is, for a writer commonly assumes it is only the producer who gets him the job.

An insecure director has a wider field in which to operate. Basically he can be insecure because he doesn't know what he wants—from the writer or from the actors, from the technical crew or the cutter (and, in a few unfortunate cases, from any of them). As a result his potential victims are legion. The case has been finely put by Arthur Hopkins in his book, *Reference Point*. It is about the theatre, but the parallels are deadly and apt.

He prays for delivery:—

"From the director who inflicts his barbed jokes on defenceless people.

"From the director who suffers the tortures of the delivery room.

"From the hysterical director, a fugitive from the home for wayward girls.

"From the director who keeps actors waiting while he is prostrate with exhaustion.

"From the director who keeps actors sitting around while he tries to make up that rumpled bed—his mind.

"From the director who stages a big scene which he has planned for his own stellar appearance."

This makes it only too clear that we can be the most dangerous of all.

3

The Blind Run was an original idea for a film, without dramatic structure but with a point of view. The problem in developing it was to create situations and dialogue that

reflected this point of view. On occasion I have earned my living as a writer. For most of my films I have supplied ideas for situations or changed existing ones, and written some dialogue scenes. But I don't regard myself as a writer. (Ideally I would prefer not to write at all, being no doubt even more indulgent than a professional to the few lines I've written that have pleased me.)

Warners wanted me to use one of their contract writers, and suggested Leon Uris, whose *Battle Cry* had just made a successful film. This didn't prove he was the kind of writer I was looking for, but he was enthusiastic about the subject, seemed to share the point of view, and there was an intriguing episode in his personal history. Before becoming an established writer, he had been a distribution supervisor for a San Francisco newspaper. To the forty boys working under him, who came to him with their problems, he had acted as a father confessor.

Uris began by spending ten days as an apprentice social worker at Juvenile Hall, the detention centre where all kinds of children and adolescents who have got into all kinds of trouble—from getting lost to setting fire to a house, or even murder—are held for examination and interview by social workers and psychiatrists before their cases come up in court.

We had first approached Juvenile Hall and the Juvenile Bureau of the city police department some time earlier, uncertain of the reception that might be forthcoming. Richard Brooks had told me that, through no fault of his own, he had failed to get any official cooperation on *Blackboard Jungle*. He had been advised to tell the authorities that he had no script, for fear that certain scenes would meet with objection or disapproval. This was bad advice, as the deception was discovered, the authorities were angry, and Brooks was refused even an interview and told by the police to expect no cooperation at all.

I could truthfully say, on my first visit there, that I had no script. But I knew what I wanted, and explained it frankly to Judge McKesson at Juvenile Hall, and to Dr. Coudley, chief psychiatrist there. They liked the approach and offered us everything we needed: talks with social workers and psychiatrists, admission to interviews with young delinquents and to courtrooms, going out on riot calls in a police car.

Out of all this had come confirmation of my original point of departure. In listening to these adolescents talk about their lives and their acts, two impressions always recurred. What they did had a terrifying, morose aimlessness, like the 16-year-old boy who ran his car into a group of young children "just for fun". What they felt, when asked about their families, was a bitter isolation and resentment. All told similar stories—divorced parents, parents who could not guide or understand, who were indifferent or simply "criticised", parents who needed a scapegoat in the family.

4

Leon Uris approached his first treatment with diligence and research. As a way of feeling himself into the subject, he began by writing a short history of the imaginary small town in which the action was to be set: sketching the growth of one of those quiet "normal" communities now astonished by the number of juvenile delinquents in their midst.

The treatment itself, however, gave me the ungrateful task of explaining it was not what I wanted. One of the most difficult things for a writer is to try and follow somebody else's point of view, to create a story for an imagination not his own. On an adaptation, he can discover concrete instances of the director's attitude towards the material. On somebody else's original, he is working in the dark. It was like an eye test at the optician's—could he read the characters in my mind as he might a chart on the wall? We did not, it seemed, perceive the same characters on the chart. The search had to continue.

Of the writers available at the time, Irving Shulman seemed the likeliest. Apart from his work as a novelist and in films,

he had been a high school teacher. He was also deeply interested in sports cars, which suggested a promising point of contact with Jimmy Dean.

By this time I had seen *East of Eden*, had met Jimmy and knew he was the ideal actor for Jim Stark. It was still far from certain, although he was interested in the project, that he would play the part. One side of the difficulty was personal. Since beginning to know him a little, I had realised that, for a successful collaboration, he needed a special kind of climate. He needed reassurance, tolerance, understanding. An important way of creating this climate was to involve him at every stage in the development of the picture. Accordingly, he met Shulman one afternoon at my home.

The result was disappointing. After a brief spurt, the talk of cars dwindled away to nothing. Suspiciously, rather menacingly, as happened when rapport was not forthcoming at a first encounter, Jimmy withdrew.

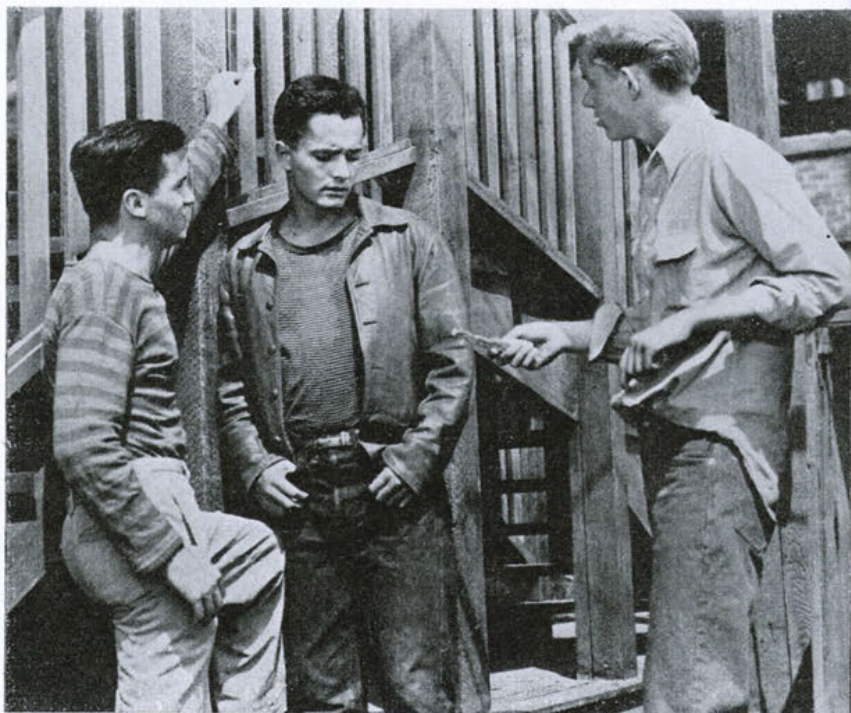
Shulman at once set about constructing a screenplay in some detail. Unlike Uris, he considered active research unnecessary and did not visit Juvenile Hall or talk to any of the people with whom I had made contact there. His talent for inventing or remembering incidents led us quickly forward, however, in some directions.

We started by discussing the school gang, and Shulman remembered a newspaper item about a "chickie run" at night on Pacific Palisades. A group of adolescents had assembled in stolen cars on the cliff-top plateau. Drivers were to race each other towards the edge. The first to jump clear before the rim of the cliff, the drop to the sea, was a "chickie". On this night one of the boys failed to jump in time. The "chickie run" on the plateau replaced the original blind run through the tunnel.

We discussed Plato, the lonely boy trying to escape from his drab indifferent family, and tried to find a more definite character for him. Although in Shulman's screenplay he became more overtly psychotic than in the final version, we arrived at a new background, a new basic situation, for him. His loneliness now came, like Jim's and Judy's, from a well-to-do home; hesitant, craving affection, filled with violent inner struggles, he lived in a large house with his neglectful, pleasure-seeking mother, and had contact with his father only from a cheque that arrived with a typewritten note pinned on it—for support of son. For some reason the front office at Warners had strong objections to this. I could only reply that for me it had an equally strong reality, as I have two sons in that situation, and it was an idea drawn only too directly from personal experience.

These were developments, but they did not reach the heart of the story. *Romeo and Juliet* has always struck me as the best play ever written about "juvenile delinquents". I wanted a *Romeo and Juliet* feeling about Jim and Judy—and their families. Out of this came a conviction about the shape of the story. "Try to follow classic form of tragedy", I noted one day. "Make sure the unities are comprehended." The main action should be compressed into one day, beginning for Jim Stark in trouble and confusion, but ending, for the first time, in something different. Another note was: "A boy wants to be a man, quick." The problem was to show, during this day, how he started to become one.

Weisbart and I also had an idea for a school scene. The students go to an astronomy class at the Planetarium. Confronted with a giant replica of the sky, pinpointed planets and constellations glittering on it, they listen to a dry cosmic lecture. The voice drones on, of universality



Variations on a theme. Above: Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell as the young fugitives in "They Live by Night" (1948), Nicholas Ray's first film. Centre: John Derek as the delinquent from the slums in "Knock On Any Door" (1949); below, James Dean and Sal Mineo in "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955).

and space and the immense cycles of time, and concludes with a vision of the end of the world. Flashes of light explode across the sky. And while the other students mock or whisper, Plato suddenly shivers from an awareness of his own solitude.

Later, an idea for another scene at the Planetarium occurred to me. At the climax of the story, when Plato believes that Jim, his only friend, has deserted him, I thought he should return to the deserted Planetarium at night, seeking shelter under its great dome and artificial sky. It was the kind of unexpected dramatic reference I felt the story should contain; there was for me a suggestion of classical tragedy about it. Discussing the scene with Jim and with Leonard Rosenman—who, after seeing *East of Eden*, I had decided should be the composer for the film—I was encouraged that they agreed, and thought it would be one of the best scenes in the story. Shulman, however, tenaciously disagreed. He thought Plato should seek refuge in his own home.

This was a crucial point for me because it symbolised the more violent statement, the more sweepingly developed conflict that I was searching for and that Shulman seemed unable to accept. It was a gesture of anger and desperation that matched the kind of thing I had heard at Juvenile Hall.

The issue made me decide that our points of view were essentially different. In spite of the valuable things Shulman had brought to the screenplay, we were once again at a dead end.

5

According to Robert Lindner, author of the original *Rebel Without a Cause*, we were at a dead end anyway. I met him at a cocktail party sponsored by the Hacker Foundation at the Beverly Hills Hotel. He was in Hollywood to give two lectures: "The Mutiny of Adolescence" and "Must We Conform?" There was, naturally, some tension to overcome at our first meeting. He knew I had rejected his book, though he soon made it clear he was not piqued by this—only genuinely bewildered.

His own book, he told me, contained the most searching basis possible for any film on delinquency. "You must do it

this way. You must make a developmental film." In his lectures he was going to discuss the conflict between protest and conformity that faced young people today. The problem of the individual's desire to preserve himself in the face of overwhelming demands for social conformism was, he felt convinced, at the heart of the subject.

As this nervous, handsome man in his early forties (his remarkable career as a criminal psychologist was to be abruptly ended by death a year later) talked excitedly of protest and rebellion, I could not restrain the impression that he was grappling with a delayed rebellion of his own. The idea of filming his study of the young delinquent who related fantasies of violence under hypnosis seemed almost to obsess him. He almost begged me to do it; he offered his services as consultant.

I explained that one strong reason for my not wanting to film his book was that I had already made *Knock On Any Door*, about an adolescent who drifts into crime as the result of poverty and wretched upbringing, and I didn't want to repeat myself. His security, however, was unshakable. So, in its way, was mine—though behind it lay some pressing doubts.

It was now towards the end of November. Nearly two months had passed and I was still without the script, or the writer, that I wanted. Not surprisingly, Warners were anxious to set a date for shooting to begin. As so often happens when preparations for a film do not run smoothly, the rumours had started that it would never be made. A technician at the studio, someone reported to me, had laid a bet of \$250 to this effect. Dave Weisbart was having his front office troubles, and after we had started shooting told me there had been talk of abandoning the project. On a higher level, Steve Trilling as executive producer was also having to justify his faith in an idea that, although money was being spent on it, was still no more than an idea.

I made another note: "Dave and I should be considering the new young writers as possibilities. Someone who will stay right there and work with us through the rest of the show. . . ."

Moanin' Critics

To the tune of "Sobbin' Women"

"I happened to look at a copy of SIGHT AND SOUND and, you know, it's terribly highbrow".
STANLEY DONEN.

Verse:

Tell ya 'bout us British writers
Who's a-workin' for SIGHT AND SOUND;
It seems we're lonely fighters
On a cultural battle-ground:
When a movie-maker passes by
We raise one eyebrow to the sky
An' a highbrow's eyebrow's far too high—
Least that's what Donen found.

Chorus:

Though us writers is moanin', moanin', moanin'
Most o' the time,
Just the fact that we're tryin', Mister Donen,
Isn't no crime:
We act like we think we're God above
But secretly, Stan, it's you we love—
You might recall
That's the very point I'm
Tryin' to make in rhyme.

Verse:

Just think of the guys that read us
As a cerebral pursuit—
Them intellectuals need us
For to keep their wits acute—
You'll not believe we're mad to see
Your musicals, Mac, but gosh oh gee
They send us eggheads wild with glee
At the British Film Institute.

Repeat chorus:

Though us writers is moanin', moanin', moanin' . . .
ANTHONY BRODE.



Till

Co-directed by Gérard Philipe and Joris Ivens (above, right), *Till* is an adaptation of the novel by Charles de Koster dealing with the exploits of the legendary hero Till Eulenspiegel. Philipe, who himself plays the title role (right), has said of the film that its tone is predominantly comic: "de Koster made Till a symbol of the struggle of Flanders against intolerance and oppression. The story is a drama studded with comic episodes. I'm leaving the drama in the background and substituting visual comedy for verbal comedy . . ."

Jean Vilar, Fernand Ledoux and Nicole Berger are among the leading players and the decors, by Léon Barsacq, are modelled after Breughel.

An East German-French co-production, *Till* is being filmed in Eastman Colour.



J. L. ANDERSON
and DONALD RICHIE

The films of



"The Valley Between Life and Death": Hiroshi Akutagawa

Heinosuke Gosho, a veteran filmmaker whose concern has always been with the contemporary scene and the human situation, is the Japanese director most admired by the Japanese themselves. Two of his films, "Where Chimneys Are Seen" (also known as "Four Chimneys") and "An Inn at Osaka", have been shown at European festivals. Apart from this he remains, as far as the West is concerned, one of the cinema's great undiscovered talents.

Heinosuke Gosho

THE purpose of a film director's life is to describe the real life around him and create works which express the true feelings of human beings . . . all films, as all works of art, must touch the emotions of the audience and touch them deeply, but this must be done without exaggeration . . . A director must live in modern society and must be an active participant in all levels of that society's activities. The personality which he develops as an integrated person in society must be reflected in his work.—HEINOSUKE GOSHO.

In describing his idea of what a director should be, Heinosuke Gosho not only indicates his personal creed, he also goes a long way towards describing himself. Now fifty-four years old and having just finished his seventy-eighth film, he, along with Yasujiro Ozu, is the director the Japanese themselves most like, and one whose work would hold extraordinary interest for the West. Among the fashions and foibles of the Japanese film world—and they are just as evident in Japan as elsewhere—he stands apart and almost alone. Resembling Chaplin in his broad humanity and de Sica in his compassionate portrayal of the common life, Gosho is essentially concerned in his work with “the true feelings of human beings”.

I

Gosho was born on February 1, 1902, the year of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The West was just becoming aware of the potential power of Japan, and woke up still further in 1905 when Japan won the war with Russia. The Meiji period was ending and Japan stood blinking in the light of the 20th century. It was, however, only fifty years since Perry had politely but incessantly banged on Japan's front door; and the ordinary Japanese citizen, though occasionally dazzled by the flood of novelties which was pouring into the country, did not yet see that there would come a day when they would all but completely engulf the traditional Japanese way of life.

Representative of the new middle class which had been slowly growing to maturity, the Gosho family also had noble ancestry. From these illustrious forebears came the proud name of Gosho—“imperial palace”. Such was the temper of the times, however, that Heinosuke Gosho's grandfather condescended to modernism and changed the meaning to “five places”, which he did by retaining the pronunciation but altering the first character. In this way “five places” came to mean the five major cities of Japan and to indicate his wish to sell the family product—tobacco—in all of them. Later, the young grandson carried on the idea by changing his given name, considering Heiueemon much too old-fashioned and Heinosuke very modern and artistic.

The young Gosho was born to one of his father's mistresses, a geisha of famed and “ukiyo-esque” beauty, but, after the death of the legitimate son, he was made his father's heir and groomed for a position in the tobacco business. At the same time he began to see something of the life of art and pleasure, since his grandfather had interests in the artistic world. As the father continued to like geisha, the boy was often taken to their quarters; and it was here that he first saw the sketches of Yumeiji Takehisa, an artist whose delicate style many film critics have seen reflected in Gosho's films. Later, through friends at Keio University, he was taken backstage at the Imperial Theatre, visited the kabuki stars, and was introduced to the small but flourishing film industry.

These were important years for the Japanese cinema:

wartime prosperity had brought a sharp increase in production, and for the first time Japan was making pictures which could compete artistically and technically with films from overseas. These were boom years too. Japanese merchants had taken advantage of the conflict to supplant German commerce in Eastern Asia, the United States had recognised Japan's special interest in China, and the only thing at all displeasing was that Japan's demand for a statement as to racial equality was refused by the League of Nations.

After graduation (his thesis was on the distant subject of “The Pricing of Commodities”), Gosho first found a job as an extra in *Obscenity of the Viper*, a film which thirty years later was to be remade with considerably more success as *Ugetsu Monogatari*. Then, after encountering some opposition from his family, he went on to enter the Shochiku studios at Kamata in southern Tokyo. He was assigned as assistant director to Yasujiro Shimazu, a man who greatly influenced not only Gosho but many other young directors, among them Shiro Toyoda and Kozaburo Yoshimura.

Shimazu may be partially credited with establishing the *kindai-geki* (modern drama, as opposed to *jidai-geki* or costume drama), and is usually thought of as the father of the *shomin-geki*, the drama about “common people”. Instead of filling the screen with melodrama, slapstick, fighting and eroticism, as had been standard practice, Shimazu made a place for simple stories about the everyday lives of white-collar workers and the lower middle classes. Though he made many melodramas himself, his interest until his death in 1945 was in this compassionate slice-of-life film, the kind of film which *Marty* perhaps best typifies and which 35 years later started to win prizes at festivals.

In 1925, after various vicissitudes including the great Kanto earthquake, Gosho was handed a certificate stating that he was now a fully-fledged director. His first films were neither artistically nor financially successful, though *The Sky is Clear* (*Sora wa haretari*), a quiet love story about a salaried worker and a typist, plainly marked the beginnings of his style. It included a mannerism by which the audience now recognises Gosho's films, a penchant for *suikyo* settings, towns or places located by a body of water—the ocean in *The Sky is Clear*; the canal in *An Inn at Osaka*; the river in *Where Chimneys are Seen*, and the ditches in *Takekurabe*.

By the beginning of 1927 he had made eight films, had been recalled into the army and investigated for using “too many love stories”, and was beginning to think that he hadn't made too brilliant a beginning. It is 1927, however, which Gosho now considers the best year of his life; he married his first wife, a young actress, and his first picture of the year, *The Lonely Roughneck* (*Sabishii rambomono*) was a tremendous critical and popular success. It made him a “first-line” director. It also marked the initial appearance of “Goshism”, a term of critical praise by which is meant that peculiar union of pathos and humour embedded in the slice-of-life *shomin-geki*. This is the quality that Gosho has given to most of his films, *An Inn at Osaka* and *Where Chimneys are Seen* being highly developed and significant examples.

Lonely Roughneck, the story of the love of a well-bred city girl for a rough country horse-cart driver, was filmed largely on location and was at the time said to be a completely accurate reflection of Japanese village life. Gosho has always preferred location to studio work and in this film his talent for creating “atmosphere” on location first became important.

In the same year, however, his younger brother was stricken by polio, and this illness affected Gosho considerably.

His films of this period were excessively concerned with the diseased and the lame. *The Death of a Maiden* (*Shojo no shi*) and *Moon-faced* (*Okama*) dealt with tuberculosis; *The Village Bride* (*Mura no hanayome*) was about a young girl who is crippled in an accident and replaced at the altar by her younger sister. Gosho still likes the film very much because "it shows my conscience", but the censors cut it heavily; in exploring the prejudices of small town life, they said, the film attacked feudalism.

After this, as Gosho himself says, "I lost my way for several years. As my personal life began to fall apart, so did my films". His interest in disease became obsessive, and some films, like the 1928 *Road to God* (*Kami e no michi*), were little but a parading of cripples before the camera. Despondent, he even tried suicide; but in this "like all my efforts during the period, I failed". All this time, even at his lowest, he was "desperately searching for something different to get me out of my rut".

Meanwhile foreign talkies had reached Japan. They were not at first very popular, however, the main reasons being that audiences couldn't understand the dialogue and that both the film musicians and the *benshi* were up in arms against this threat to their livelihood. At first, the volume of the sound-track was cut down so that the *benshi* could give his usual explanation, but the results apparently were most confusing. Then in 1931 von Sternberg's *Morocco* was shown with subtitles and this solved the language difficulty. The Japanese industry was forced to meet this competition with sound films of its own, but most directors refused to have anything to do with "the new toy". Gosho's recent films had, understandably, been doing very badly at the box-office, and after all the Kamata directors had flatly rejected the new technique the producers turned to him and delivered an ultimatum: he was persuaded to do a two-reel trial film,

then talked into doing a feature.

Gosho's idea of a good talkie was—and to some extent remains—one containing a large amount of silence. He felt that there should be some intrinsic reason for sound rather than mere commercial expediency. After some search he found a story he liked: a young writer can't work because the woman next door keeps playing jazz on her gramophone. He protests, they become friendly, and a triangle situation develops also involving the writer's wife. The film, *Thy Neighbour's Wife and Mine* (*Madamu to nyobo*) is perhaps unimportant in Gosho's development but shows more than many others his attitude towards his craft.

In shooting the film there were no recording or dubbing facilities, so that everything had to be recorded on the final track at the same time. All the background sound, plus the gramophone so important to the plot, had to be recorded during shooting, and day after day cast and production staff were accompanied by the gramophone and a full studio orchestra wherever they went. For exterior scenes the orchestra would often have to find a place for itself among trees and bushes, blowing and fiddling away under the dialogue. They had great difficulty with long shots, since they had to hide the microphone and, naturally, had somehow to skirt the orchestra as well. Finally, to get a sense of inter-cutting within scenes, they used several cameras running simultaneously—a technique exactly corresponding to the "newly developed" methods used in making TV films—and later cut together the parts they needed for each set-up.

Gosho finally finished the film and, over Shochiku's all too obvious reluctance, got it released. It was a brilliant popular success, won Gosho a "best film" award from Kinema Jumbo, and apparently had something more to recommend it. Tadashi Iijima, one of Japan's best film critics, on looking back at the picture after two decades, says that, "he remained within cinematic traditions and borrowed none from the stage . . . He knew from the start that film must always be a film and must not attempt to be recorded theatre".

In Japan the switch-over to sound was not total, and four or five years after its introduction silent films were still being made. Gosho's *Caress* (*Aibu*), a silent film made in 1933, was a character study of a small-town doctor against the usual *suikyo* setting. It remains one of the director's favourite pictures. Next year, in *Everything that Lives* (*Ikitoshi ikerumono*), he made what was probably his best film of this period. Based on a novel by Yuso Yamamoto, it was about a salaried worker who embezzles company funds with the intention of quickly repaying the money. An office girl is blamed for the theft, falls in love with the man, and forgives him when she discovers the truth. Gosho has said of the film that he wanted to criticise the rigid bureaucracy of Japanese law enforcement, but was afraid to go too far because of previous troubles with the censor: "I think this film may have been a little too heavy for some tastes. To avoid official disapproval I had to make my characters very strong so that they could stand up against the pressures of society and bureaucracy".

Two years later Gosho contracted tuberculosis, a disease the effects of which he had often filmed, and was ill for three years. During this time he gave much thought to film-making, notably the relationship of literature to the film—a subject by which Japanese directors are always intrigued and



Atsushi Watanabe and Kinuyo Tanaka in "Thy Neighbour's Wife and Mine", one of the first Japanese sound films.



"Where Chimneys are Seen"

occasionally troubled. In *Everything that Lives* he had made his first attempt to bring to the screen what the Japanese call "pure literature" (as opposed to commercial fiction). Now, with time on his hands, he began to think out a formal approach to the subject.

This interest has since created a movement with which Goshō is always associated. *Woodenhead* (*Mokuseki*), the film he made after leaving hospital, *An Inn at Osaka*, *Where Chimneys are Seen* and especially *Takekurabe* are all examples of his interest in turning "pure literature" into film. Two other important figures in the movement (for almost all new ideas rapidly become movements in Japan) are Shiro Toyoda and Mikio Naruse: together they form a more or less united front against the commercialism of the usual Japanese production.

II

During the war Goshō was several times approached to make "policy" films, but he could produce nothing satisfactory in the form of a story and the authorities were reluctant to push him too far since he was still a sick man. He himself recalls that his greatest war effort was his participation in the "Fewer No-Good Takes" economy drives. Later he was one of many leading directors employed by Toho, a company which was among the first to "make adjustments to the new era"—as the postwar phrase had it—and which reorganised to such effect that by 1947 it was

Japan's leading studio.

He made two films there and then the protracted labour troubles began. At first he was an enthusiastic follower of the Toho Employees Union. He participated in the various strikes and, unlike many other directors, played the role of common worker rather than big committee man. Now that the political climate has changed in Japan as elsewhere, one sometimes hears such-and-such a director being vindicated with "but at least he didn't sing the Internationale and wave the red flag as Goshō did".

It should be remembered, however, that all Goshō's attempts at "left-wing" pictures in the late 'twenties had been unsuccessful from any viewpoint, and that the 1929 definition of "left-wing" did not in any case mean what it does now. The so-called "tendency" films of the period often contained little more than a very mild social realism, with even milder injections of pro-working class propaganda. Goshō's pictures failed because they lacked the extra "message" that others inserted. In fact, his main role in this so-called proletarian movement was restricted to debunking the popular and official hero types: the perfect soldier, the wise village headman, and so on. These characters in his films were portrayed as petty, sometimes stupid and always ordinary. Consequently, as Japanese critics have pointed out, they stay in one's mind longer than the over-drawn film types characteristic of the period—and consequently Goshō's contribution to this short-lived movement proved somewhat



"Takekurabe": the heroine (Misora Hibari) enters a house of prostitution in the Yoshiwara.

dubious.

Gosho doesn't deny his 1947 activities but says: "Of course I had to join because I couldn't stand seeing people who had faithfully helped me make films fired. I was no Communist but I couldn't reject the plight of my friends". But the union failed in 1951, and by that time Gosho realised that if he was to make the kind of films he wanted he could not continue to work at Toho. He had discovered that, "no matter what difficulties a director may have in expressing his ideas on the screen, he is faced with one that is not a matter of his own talent—this is the unavoidable conflict between company finances and directors. A film cannot be ordered like a product . . . No director is free of company policy [and] the great danger is that directors will do or will make things in which they themselves do not believe".

Illness and labour troubles kept Gosho inactive until 1951, when, with the above in mind, he organised a group called "Studio Eight" (they used the English) whose films were to be distributed by various studios. Gosho's first with the group was *Drifting Clouds* (*Wakare kumo*), in which he returned to his early idea of making films entirely on location. After that came *Where Chimneys are Seen* (*Entotsu no mieru basho*) and *An Inn at Osaka* (*Osaka no yado*), shown respectively at the Berlin and Venice festivals. In 1954 he made *The Valley Between Life and Death* (*Ai to shi no tanima*) and *The Cock Crows Twice* (*Niwatori wa futatabi naku*). His only film for 1955 was *Takekurabe*, released under the misleading title of *Daughters of Yoshiwara*. (Actually *takekurabe* indicates a comparison of heights, but its true meaning defies translation.) Finally, he has just finished his seventy-eighth film, *Twice on a Certain Night* (*Aru yuro futatabi*).

III

Gosho has said that his philosophy of art is simple: "Only if we love our fellow human beings can we create. From this love of humanity streams all creativity". His, however, is not the facile and optimistic humanism of a William Saroyan—though the two men have points in common. Gosho's more closely resembles that of Chaplin. In fact "Gosho-ism" as a style has been defined as "something that makes you laugh and cry at the same time". (The Japanese word for this complicated emotion is *nakiwara*.) And Gosho is like Chaplin in that his "love of humanity" contains not pity—he has already gone through that—but compassion. Like a good many other creators in this century, he finds human individuality the most precious thing in the world; and when it is threatened the result is tragedy.

Gosho's people, like the characters in the novel from which he took *Where Chimneys are Seen*, are all innocent. Their lives occur almost before they are aware of it. Like the young heroine of *Takekurabe*, designed from birth for a life of prostitution, they are never fully aware of what is happening to them. They do not struggle because they don't really know how to struggle. Only when their lives become insupportable do they fight, and even then they often do not know what they are fighting against. Only Gosho—and we—know. In his hands the *shomin-geki*, the drama of common people, is raised to the level of personal tragedy.

Yet the tragedy is not unmitigated: at the end something has happened, there is a sense of release. The circumstances remain the same, but the outlook has changed and there is even room for optimism. At the end of *Where Chimneys are Seen*, the husband looks once more at the four factory chimneys, so placed that all four are never visible at once, so that they never appear the same to any two people, and says: "Life is whatever you think it is. It can be sweet or it can be bitter . . . whichever you are".

The danger of sentimentality is ever present in Japanese cinema, and particularly so in Gosho's films. There is always the risk that emotion will be lavished on unworthy objects. But Gosho, again like Chaplin, skirts the edge of sentimentality: just before the final plunge, something always pulls him up short. In *An Inn at Osaka* there is a famous scene in which the inn-servant, desperately poor, tries to sell a crayon drawing of a cow sent her by her son. After this very affecting episode comes a scene of ferocious cruelty, involving the callous landlady, which is followed by a very funny scene showing the landlady's remorse. Then Gosho includes the really heart-breaking scene in the picture, when the mother is forced to display her few belongings in the search for a missing thousand yen note. Their shabbiness is revealed along with the few small toys she has managed to buy for her child, to take to him on the trip which in all probability she will never make. In the resulting conflict of emotion all idea of sentimentality is lost. Convinced of the emotional validity of the scene, we are prepared to implicate ourselves to the extent of weeping over it.

In this and other ways, Gosho succeeds in making his characters completely human. He never controls them "from above", as it were, as de Sica occasionally allows himself to do. Rather, he seems to set the cameras rolling on life itself and then gently whispers to you that these people are really worth saving. And they all are, for even his villains are comprehensible and sympathetic. No-one in Japanese films is ever really to blame for what happens, and this is particularly true of Gosho's characters. In *An Inn at Osaka*, though everyone accuses everyone else, no one is guilty. Money is the particular problem in this picture, and in it Gosho has used, as he occasionally does, fragments from his own life. When he was a boy in Osaka his grandfather once told him: "To have money doesn't mean that you can afford to be cruel to others. To make money is an important thing but one must stop short of becoming unbalanced about it". This bit of homely and prosaic philosophy

became the theme of the very unprosaic *An Inn at Osaka*. But beyond money, and beyond Osaka—the commercial centre of Japan—is the austere law which slaughters the innocents and which orders Goshō's universe. Yet at the end, as always, is the faint light of hope. When the film's hero is finally transferred to Tokyo he says: "None of us can say he is happy and fortunate, but yet things still seem promising . . . we are able to laugh at our respective misfortunes, and as long as we can laugh we still have the strength and courage to build a new future".

IV

Extremely interested in literature, Goshō always tries to get the best possible script, sometimes writing it himself. In the same way he likes to work closely with his art director, showing an almost fanatical concern over details. Even when forced to shoot in the studio, he prepares the set with immense care. In the pre-production stage of *Takekurabe* he managed to visit fifty temples as research for the one finally designed for the film. During one of the scenes it is said that he himself polished the wooden floor until it had acquired precisely the sheen that he felt was needed.

The result is the typical Goshō atmosphere. This is to be distinguished from the atmosphere of, say, a Kenji Mizoguchi film. Mizoguchi has the eye of a painter and is almost entirely concerned with the pictorial: films like *Yukihi* and *Tales of Taira Clan* live on locale alone. His atmosphere is one created by craft, by the instruments of the cinema itself, by camera viewpoint, camera movement, use of colour and so on. Goshō, however, has the eye of a dramatist. The locale is important only because it is a part of the characters that move and live within it. The raw material of the film, the characters and what they are and do, creates the atmosphere of a Goshō picture. He consequently prefers a close relationship with his cameraman, liking someone who knows exactly what he wants. Mitsuo Miura, who first worked with him in 1925, has photographed thirty-three of his films. Another favourite cameraman is Jyōgi Ohara, whose work on *An Inn at Osaka* has been called the best ever seen in a Japanese film.

All this is to some extent connected with Goshō's continued interest in the fusion between sound and silent film technique. To this day he regards the integration of the two as the most important experiment that can be made in film production. Of a film as late as *Image* (*Omokage*; 1948) Tadashi Iijima wrote: "It seems that Goshō's spirit has never fully left the silent era even though he is our first talkie director. In this picture, a good half is just like an old silent film".

Goshō employs various methods in retaining the technique of the silent film, and two of these particularly should be mentioned. The first is his employment of pictorial symbols, or what I'm afraid we must call symbolism. *The Valley Between Life and Death* is loaded with "trains running to destinations unknown". The main plot is symbolic and so are the sub-plots, including one in which a young man tries to arrange his own accidental death so that his impoverished family can collect his insurance. *Where Chimneys are Seen* uses not only the chimneys themselves and a scene in which the young hero tries to balance a pencil on end, fails, and tries again in the "if at first you don't succeed" tradition; it also uses a live baby as a symbol of regeneration.

Goshō further seeks to infuse the vitality of the silent film into the talkie by employing numerous close-ups, and by the number and rapidity of separate shots. As early as 1925, in *Youth* (*Seishun*) he began using a great number of shots, saying that he was impressed by their importance in Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle*—a film which he saw twenty times and which, along with Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris*, he regards as the greatest foreign influence on his work. *An Inn at Osaka* is composed of over a thousand separate shots, and *Takekurabe* has even more. In production,



Heinosuke Gosho (centre) on the set during the shooting of "Takekurabe". He is discussing with Misora Hibari, the film's leading actress, the type of "geta" (clogs) to be used in a scene.

Goshō, in contra-distinction to directors like Mizoguchi, is known as "the director who uses three shots where others use one".

He is also extremely careful in the matter of film music, to which he maintains a completely experimental attitude. One of his most brilliant effects occurs in the final reel of *Takekurabe*, when the heroine finally, and all unknowingly, enters the brothel. In this ten-minute finale, the composer Yasushi Akutagawa extends a motif first heard during the credit titles and creates a kind of primitive passacaglia, actually a gigantic ground-bass. Though the scenes are extremely short, changing constantly, the sequence is held tightly together by a musical device which makes the film's conclusion a kind of coda, and a completely impressive and moving one.

V

As one of Japan's best-liked directors, it is curious that Goshō's films have received so few showings outside his own country. One reason is that the Japanese seem to believe they have a monopoly on "Goshō-ism"; another is the attitude taken by the producers themselves, who always assure foreigners that the films of Goshō and Ozu are much "too Japanese" and consequently cannot be understood by anyone else. Actually "Goshō-ism", though a Japanese quality, is by no means solely a Japanese quality, and these films, among the most "Japanese" made, are also paradoxically capable of becoming the most international in appeal.

Meanwhile Goshō, now living in Mishima at the base of Mount Fuji, continues to work, saying: "I thought I could not continue making pictures after I was thirty . . . but somehow I continued. After I was thirty . . . I knew I could make pictures until I was at least fifty years old. I was certain that artistic senility would grip me. Well, I am now past fifty and I still feel my work isn't done. I now plan to work in films until I am eighty. Or maybe I'll go right on working until I drop dead".



"The Boyhood of Dr. Noguchi": a schoolboy wrestling match on the sands.

EDINBURGH

VENICE

BERLIN

Festival Reports

EDINBURGH

UPWARDS of 150 films from some 30 countries were shown during the three weeks of this year's Edinburgh Festival. Even if space allowed, it would be impossible to cover them all in a single review. Certain of the films have already been, or will be, written about in SIGHT AND SOUND: for example, *Invitation to the Dance*, Gene Kelly's part-live, part-animation ballet trio which, with the short *Festival in Edinburgh*, made up the programme shown to H.M. the Queen and T.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Margaret on August 20th; *On the Bowery*; *Les Mauvaises Rencontres*; and *Reach for the Sky*. Here then are some personal likes—and one or two dislikes—from the rest of this multifarious *foire aux images*.

To begin with, a dislike (and a reminder that the false notion, still-born some forty years ago, that great plays spell great films, is still with us): *Oedipus Rex* in the screen version, directed by Tyrone Guthrie, of his stage production at the Stratford, Ontario Festival which was also brought over for the Edinburgh Drama and Music Festival. (This year, with both film and play as well as Stravinsky's opera on the same theme, there was—unavoidably—some talk of an Oedipus complex!) Though justly distinguished as a stage authority, Dr. Guthrie is, alas, no film-maker. Masks, settings and the speaking of W. B. Yeats' superb version of Sophocles are no doubt admirable within the conventions of the theatre. But on the screen, the declamations, the heavy pauses and stylised movements of the *dramatis personae*, defeat even the fearful potency of the original. Stage origins weigh, though rather less fatally, on another film, *The Judge of Zalamea*, directed by Martin Hellberg, from East Germany. This drama, in German rhyming couplets translated from the Spanish of Calderon, is nevertheless not without movement, is quite handsomely mounted in a rather sombre fashion, and has a notably full-blooded performance by H. J. Büttner as the peasant judge.

Happily, however, examples were not lacking of the sort

of realism and "living cinema" which this Festival has not failed to discover and publicise since it was bravely launched by the Edinburgh Film Guild ten years ago. In the past, these films have often arrived unheralded and from not altogether likely sources, and have been interesting for their promise rather than for any particular technical achievement. Such a film for me this year was *Three in One*, a trilogy of short stories on the theme of Australian neighbourliness or "mateship", directed by an Australian, Cecil Holmes, of whom I confess I had not previously heard. Not without surface roughnesses and imperfections (the last episode, about a young Sydney couple frustrated in their marriage plans by the housing shortage, is unduly drawn out and cliché-ridden), *Three in One* remains nevertheless remarkably human and alive. The first story—of the "decent" burial given a stranger found drowned in the outback—is both touching and human; and the second, which tells how, in the Depression of 1931, two out-of-works raid a rich man's wood for timber, is developed with considerable suspense and shrewdness of observation. "Ca", said a French critic sitting beside me, "C'est du cinéma!" And certainly *Three in One* (as perhaps only John Heyer's *Back of Beyond* has really done before) suggests that Australian film-makers have at hand the kind of material from which a "living cinema", rooted in a particular scene and a way of life, might be created.

The opening film of the Festival was Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life*, which was receiving its world premiere. Shot in Metrocolor, this biography of Van Gogh (explosively played by Kirk Douglas) has a scenario by Norman Corwin which improves on the original book by Irving Stone. This is Hollywood giving—and for once why not?—the full treatment to a great painter, with exceptional respect for period values and a fluid use of the artist's sketches and paintings, excellently rendered on the vast spread of the wide screen. Despite misgivings, it would be churlish not to acknowledge a courageous and singularly uncompromising attempt to enter a plea for the artist in the only terms which,



"The Shadow": discovery of a traitor in the ranks of a Polish rebel band.

after all, millions of cinemagoers are likely to understand.

Outwardly less impressive, but more to my own taste, was another biographical tribute, this time from Japan, *The Boyhood of Dr. Noguchi*. Made by the team responsible for *Trumpet Boy*, the endearing children's film shown at last year's Festival, the story concerns a medical scientist of international fame. Directed by Hideo Sekigawa, it is a "documentary" not only because it is based, pretty faithfully one would imagine, on fact, but on account of its attempt at a certain sort of intimacy and warmth of statement; like *Trumpet Boy*, it is definitely on the side of the angels but none the worse for that. The playing, especially that of Eisuke Dargenji as the youthful Noguchi emerging (the period is the 1890's) from a background of poverty and personal affliction, is of the high order of naturalness one has come to expect in Japanese films. Equally natural, one might almost say comely, is the characterisation in the Russian film *Magdana's Donkey*, directed by Z. Harshiladze. (I didn't see what was generally considered to be the most interesting of the Soviet films, *The Rummyantsev Case*, a thriller about gang delinquency in present-day Russia.)

Both *The Boyhood of Dr. Noguchi* and *Magdana's Donkey* exemplify the virtues of simplicity in the shaping of film narratives; *The Shadow*, an ambitious feature from Poland, illustrates this principle in reverse. The director, Jerzy Kawalarowicz, is clearly a master-hand, with something of the instinctive yet highly professional flair one finds in technicians like Reed and Clouzot. The story, told in flashbacks, is largely one of wartime and early post-war treachery and intrigue. The acting throughout is very good, and each episode, within itself, is developed with compulsive skill in direction and editing. But, unfortunately, the scenario is confused and over-complicated so that the central theme becomes rather baffling; also, the traitor—the central character on whom the action pivots—remains no more than a cipher.

There were this year three feature-length films, greatly varying in interest as examples of film-making but all remarkable for their images of remote and relatively unknown peoples. *The Last Cannibals*, in which the Danish explorer Jens Bjerre, acting as a one-man production team, has brought back from New Guinea what for once may soberly be called unique records of the world's last cannibals; *Seven Years in Tibet*, directed by Hans Nieter and based on the book by Heinrich Harrer (who plays himself in the film); and the Malayan Film Unit's *Timeless Temiars*. Noni Wright's script for this last film is well-turned, and she and

the team of Malayan technicians with whom she worked bring a new degree of sympathy and sense of proportion (the emphasis is on the *civilised* behaviour, amply shown in the film, of the aborigines of Northern Malaya) to a category of film-making whose tone has too often in the past been, consciously or otherwise, *de haut en bas*.

The most attractive of the documentary films of the traditional shape and length was Bert Haanstra's *And There was no More Sea*, a characteristic and affectionate record of folk-life, apparently now disappearing, around what was once the Zuider Zee. Examples of work from different but equally trusted sources in the field of short films were not lacking. UPA's cartoon, *The Invisible Moustache of Raoul Dufy* was, apparently, the first of a series of similarly witty, lovingly irreverent and extremely subtle biographical fantasies on modern French painters. In Norman McLaren's *Rhythmic*, he and Evelyn Lambart make the numerals perform unprecedented antics. (It would, by the way, be interesting to see McLaren's rather specialised imagination at play in the higher philosophical reaches in co-operation with, say, our own genius of visualised mathematics, Robert Fairthorne.) A quieter sort of pleasure is to be had from Basil Wright's perceptive *Stained Glass at Fairford*, made in collaboration with John Betjeman, whose commentary is of the agreeably informal kind familiar through his Shell advertising films on ITV.

Of films made for television shown at Edinburgh, two stood out in contrasting ways—the Rev. Peter Hamilton's moving film, made for the BBC, *Poverty, Chastity and Obedience*, on the Anglican monastic Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield; and *The Jazz Age*, an NBC film evoking, through an extraordinary montage of extracts from old newsreels and features, the period of Scott Fitzgerald and of F. L. Allen's *Only Yesterday*, and with a suitably dead-pan commentary from another Allen (Fred).

Activities stimulated by or associated with the Film Festival were this year on an increased scale and, within reason, this is a healthy development. Events like the celebration of the Rank Organisation's 21st Birthday, with the interesting retrospective programmes arranged for the occasion, and the absorbing exhibition of Polish film posters, would, however, each of them call for an article in itself.

JOHN MADDISON.



"Three In One": Leonard Thiele and Jerome Levy in the story "The Load of Wood".

Kenji Mizoguchi, the most distinguished of the first generation of Japanese directors, died in Kyoto during August, aged 58. Mizoguchi, who made over 100 films, specialised in historical subjects; and those shown at European Festivals (notably *Ugetsu Monogatari*, *Sansho-Dayu*, *Chikamatsu Monogatari*) revealed a unique purity of style and a finely poetic feeling for the past. His last film, *Akasen Chitai* (*Street of Shame*), shown at Venice, is a contemporary social drama set in a Tokyo brothel. Machiko Kyo (below, right) plays Mickey, one of the prostitutes.

FESTIVAL FILMS



Satyajit Ray's humane and compassionate study of Bengali life, *Pather Panchali*, shown at both the Cannes and Edinburgh Festivals, is probably the Indian cinema's first masterpiece. Right: Subir Bannerjee as Apu, the young son.

Below: a scene from *L'Impero del Sole* (*Empire of the Sun*), presented at Venice, an Italian production in CinemaScope and Ferraniacolor dealing with primitive life in Peru. The directors are Enrico Gras and Mario Craveri, who made *Magia Verde* and *Continente Perduto*





Francois Perier and Maria Schell (right) in René Clément's "Gervaise".

VENICE

THE new policy adopted at Venice this year raises the whole question of the European film festivals, which have grown so rapidly, both in number and frequency, since the end of the war, that the problems of overcrowding, and shortage of worthy material, have reached serious proportions. Last year the presentation of a number of frankly commercial pictures at Venice created something of a scandal. A new director was appointed, and a new policy devised. This year, for the first time in the history of any festival, all films entered for competition had to be screened in advance before a selection committee. The three members of this committee (all Italians) were charged with the responsibility of choosing fourteen films: only these would be shown at the festival, and only the best would be chosen, regardless of nationality. Since the mere fact, under this system, of a film being shown in the festival would be proof of its outstanding quality, the number of prizes to be awarded by the international jury was reduced to one Grand Prix, and two acting awards. In theory, then, a festival of only the best. A critic's festival.

It seemed an enlightened policy: but the result has been disappointing. Partly, no doubt, this was due to the intense opposition of producers to any policy of pre-selection. The film producers' associations in both Britain and America refused to take part in the Venice Festival under the new conditions: films which were therefore refused to the viewing committee included *Reach for the Sky*, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, *The Searchers*, *Giant* and *Moby Dick*. The Russians were reported to be at first suspicious of the scheme, but finally agreed to take part and were represented by one (not very distinguished) film. Two independent productions were finally included from America, but nothing from Britain, Poland, Czechoslovakia or Hungary. Two Italian pictures, one of which was patently unworthy of selection, won a place in the festival.

This last fact raises, of course, the classic objection: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Or, who is to guarantee the guarantors? Critics who in the past had complained at the bad films presented at festivals, and called angrily for some standard of selection, now found themselves ungratefully resentful of the choice put before them: what about those sixty-odd rejected films? What confidence could we have in a selection committee which allotted a fine position to Camerini's wretched *Sister Lutetia* (Magnani as a maternal nun in a spiritless pinch from *Marcelino*), and which rejected Maselli's new film, or the Hungarian *Little Glass of Beer*, of which such good reports had been received from Karlovy Vary? Was *The Immortal Garrison* really Russia's best offering—why not *Private Ivan Brovkin* instead? Or as well? And so on. . . .

In short, if a policy of pre-selection achieves anything less

than a group of indisputably outstanding entries, there is bound to be dissatisfaction. If the majority of films shown are merely to be "interesting", the austere rule of only one presentation a day results in an effect that can only be called thin. The retrospective shows at Venice this year were of a high standard—six shows to Dreyer and five to Chaplin—and their organisers are to be congratulated; but after all it is the contemporary movement of the cinema that must be our first concern on these occasions. This is where the sheer number of films shown at a festival like Cannes, however exhausting at the time, finally repays one with a rich variety of impressions, a valuable bird's-eye-view of the cinema at large.

It may be objected that it is precisely because this is the achievement of Cannes, Berlin, Karlovy Vary and Edinburgh, that a new personality is necessary for Venice; and for this objection there is much to be said. It must, however, be plainly said as well that, if Venice is to claim this kind of prestige, it will have to bestir itself to deserve it. The selection committee needs to be broadened, perhaps to include non-Italian members. It should certainly be more strict, and at the same time more catholic (in the non-sectarian sense of the term) in its policy. An attempt, too, might well be made to raise the tone of the showings to a level consonant with the dignified pretensions of the festival: this year the short films were of extremely poor quality, and for some extraordinary reason did not appear to have been generally chosen from the Shorts Festival prizewinners. No room could be found even for Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery*—in spite of the fact that it had won the documentary Grand Prix—while at every performance the feature was preceded by a festival newsreel of quite remarkable vulgarity. The juxtaposition of Miss Abbe Lane's *Mambo*, performed on the terrace of the Excelsior Hotel, with Signor Petrucci's tribute to the memory of Kenji Mizoguchi, was particularly unfortunate.

What of the films themselves? As inferred above, Camerini's *Sister Lutetia* is a charmless commercial picture with a characteristic performance by Anna Magnani. The other Italian contribution, *Empire of the Sun*, is an elaborate CinemaScope impression of primitive life in Peru: technically superb, magnificent colour (Ferranicolor), but ruined by persistent showmanship, without true feeling or concern for its subject (directors, Enrico Gras and Mario Craveri). The two American entries offered sad instances of talented directors laid low by current Hollywood conditions: both *Bigger Than Life* (Nicholas Ray) and *Attack* (Robert Aldrich) could have come only from a climate of befuddlement and hysteria—a whole tradition gone sour. The latter particularly, a theatrical version of a bad war play, is nauseating with its overworked shock-treatment, its spurious emotionalism and its self-righteous, "tough guy" sentimentality.

Military themes also came up in the German and Russian pictures. *The Captain from Koepenick* (Helmut Kautner) is a version of Zuckmayer's satirical comedy about an old man who can only get justice by masquerading as an army officer; a plodding adaptation, without the bite of satire, finally implicitly conformist. The Russian *Immortal Garrison*, an epic story of the siege of Brest Litovsk, was old-fashioned, but at least a work of conviction, with some human solidity to it. This was the work of a new director, Z. Agranenko; and so was the Greek *Ogre of Athens*. Nikos Kandouros is a young director who scorns to discipline his talent. But his story, of a timid bank clerk's disastrous incursion into the Athens underworld, has a true violence and sense of atmosphere in it. However rough its expression, there is an original personality at work here.

The French selection, with names like Autant-Lara and Clément, looked strong on paper. But the former's *La Traversée de Paris*, from a bitter Occupation anecdote by Marcel Aymé, missed its mark, veering haphazardly between burlesque, satire and melodrama. To Anglo-Saxon tastes at least such an evasive shrug at tragedy was in doubtful

taste—for all its good acting by Gabin and Bourvil. Aurenche and Bost, those universal adaptors, were responsible also for the script of *Gervaise*, René Clément's elaborate version of Zola's *L'Assomoir*; and here again promise was unfulfilled. Clément has certainly pulled out all his stops for this story of alcoholism and squalor, but he never gets beyond the effective, and Maria Schell's masochistic (and quite unsuitably Germanic) performance only increases the sense of exhibitionistic suffering.

A far more vital impression was made by the two Spanish films. J. A. Bardem's *Calle Major* (*Main Street*) has the same stylistic authority as his *Death of a Cyclist*, with fewer mannerisms; but he is still far too susceptible to the influence of his contemporaries. It is not merely Betsy Blair's delicate and radiant performance as a small-town spinster, or the group of callous Spanish "Vitelloni" who so cruelly hoax her, that reminds one of *Marty* and Fellini: for all Bardem's intelligence and seriousness, his film remains a cold, often virtuoso exercise which, though straining for emotion, too often only achieves sentimentality. Luis Berlanga's *Calabuch*, simpler and more spontaneous, is far more successful in its kindly fable of a runaway atomic scientist at loose in a sunny, eccentric little Spanish town. The festival audience took this to their hearts, and rightly: Berlanga's talent is individual, genial, and more expert than his deceptively casual style might lead one to suppose.

I have left to the end the festival's three most remarkable offerings: the last picture of Mizoguchi, *The Street of Shame*, the Mexican semi-documentary, *Torero*, and the Japanese *Burmese Harp*. Mizoguchi's picture is a contemporary story, set in a Tokyo brothel, an acute, unsensational study of an

ambiance of degradation. The film does not equal this great director's work at its finest: the script contains too many banal and even melodramatic elements. Yet so perfect is the style, so sharp and humane its observation, that it remains a rare and absorbing experience. *Torero* (Carlos Velo) is a very different kind of film (it was shown out of festival at Cannes, and illustrated in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*): a semi-documentary biography of one of Mexico's leading bullfighters, Luis Procuna, it combines documentary and reconstructed elements into a fascinating and revealing picture both of the sport, and of the men who live by and for it. This is documentary as it should be, charting not merely externals and techniques, but states of mind and spirit as well.

Lastly, rich and strange, *The Burmese Harp* (Kon Ichikawa). At the end of the war in Burma a Japanese detachment is taken prisoner, and awaits repatriation. But one of its members had escaped, and been left for dead: recovering, he starts a weary trek to rejoin his comrades. On the way he passes ghastly heaps of dead soldiers, woods and hillsides strewn with corpses. He becomes gripped by an obsession: to bury these bodies—as some sort of expiation, perhaps remorse on the world's behalf. Use of Western music made this film suspect to some British critics, and others objected to what they felt to be a white-washing of the Japanese army. But *The Burmese Harp* is not a documentary, and tries neither to be realistic nor representative. It expresses an anguish. There is something absolutely haunting about it: its poetry is uneven, but authentic, at times intense. And poetry is what we need now.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

Edmund Gwenn as the fugitive atomic scientist in "Calabuch".





"Lauta Mancia": Excursion to a working-class district in search of a lost dog.

BERLIN

BERLIN's first international jury, an innovation this year, can have added little to the prestige of its Film Festival. The vote of the public, also recorded as in previous years, offered evidence of a more astute and adventurous judgment. The jury's selection of Gene Kelly's *Invitation to the Dance* (First Prize) and Olivier's *Richard III* (International Prize) is defensible, but its third choice of *Autumn Leaves*, a shoddily confected Joan Crawford vehicle, leaves one baffled as to whether political pressure or sheer lack of judgment dictated it. Graceful and tactful tributes were made to all the major participating nations, while Finland's disturbing *Unknown Soldier* was overlooked in the prize-giving. ("There's no story", was one high-placed complaint I overheard; "the subtitles contain words that no lady should be forced to read", was another). Spain's small master-piece *Pepote* was also disregarded. These films, however, rated respectively sixth and second in the public choice.

Films, for the most part, seemed to have been collected with a magpie disregard for quality, and the first half of the Festival was dispiriting. France's *La Sorcière*, a naive venture into Nordic folklore, Japan's *Madame White Snake*, an ascetic Buddhist legend pampered into a soft and silly romance, Belgium's *Le Toubib*, an inferior imitation *Riffi*, Egypt's *Lost Youth* and Mexico's *Serenata en Mexico* . . . the list seemed endless.

Three films during the first part of the Festival treated of sexual frustration and the struggle for power and money in a prosperous bourgeois milieu. The first, a savage melodrama entitled *Le Salaire du Péché* (director: Denis de la Patellière), is set in La Rochelle and creates an uneasy, claustrophobic world reminiscent of Mauriac's Bordeaux; an unpleasant work, but lacking the sly sanction with which French directors have lately been investing their dealings in violence and social decay. *Vor Sonnenuntergang* (*Before Sundown*), based on Gerhart Hauptmann's last play, is ably enough directed by Gottfried Reinhardt but fails to establish the true texture of its conflict. The same is true of the first part of *Giftas* (*Married*), a stylish film based on two Strindberg stories. The first (starring Anita Björk) concerns a frigid woman who wields her physical attraction to blackmail her husband into the unscrupulous pursuit of business success. Direction (by Anders Henriksen) and playing are accomplished, but, as in *Miss Julie*, the very dexterity of the camera, the extension of the action in space, robs the

material of its brooding concentration. These works, wherein so much of the characters' drama is essentially "inner", seem to demand a limited field of action if they are to create their dramatic mood. The second part of *Giftas* is an enchanting comedy: a sensual couple's marriage is temporarily disrupted by the intervention of a fierce feminist intent on transforming it into a union of souls. Mai Zetterling plays captivatingly as the naively sensuous wife.

Britain, apart from *Richard III*, entered a conventionally efficient Scotland Yard thriller, *The Long Arm*, and a political farce, *The Iron Petticoat*, both of which have been seen in London. Italy's offerings (*Lo Scapolo*, *Pane, Amore e . . .*, *Donne Sole* and *Donatella*) were strictly commercial and none of them had the quality of *Lauta Mancia*, shown *hors concours*. This is the first production of two brothers, director Fabio and producer Nazario de Agostini. Its story, simple and in the neo-realist tradition, relates the adventures of a small boy and a large dog strayed from its rich owners. The film's social comment is sometimes brash and superficial, but much of the action has a warm life and an unselfconscious style remarkable in a first work. Fabio Agostini is clearly a most promising talent.

Perhaps the Festival's most completely successful film was Spain's *Pepote*, with the same director and small hero as *Marcelino*. Uncle Jacinto, a former bullfighter, lives in a derelict shack with his nephew Pepote. Regularly drunk and withdrawn from life, he ekes out a shabby existence as best he can. A chance arises whereby he can resume his former glory for one night in a circus. The money for the costume is finally raised, but the occasion is a disaster; the bull is old and harmless and the torero merely a butt for cheap jokes by the circus clowns. Sick with humiliation, he only recovers his self-respect when Pepote, lying, claims that he was unable to gain admission to the show and consequently saw nothing of his uncle's triumph. Expertly directed by Ladislav Vajda, the film establishes a central relationship that is convincingly and unsentimentally real. Pablito Calvo's Pepote is once again a triumph of naturalism, and Antonio Vico as the ageing bullfighter, ascetic, ungratifying, the eyes shadowed and withdrawn in remembered glory, is unforgettable.

There remains Finland's *The Unknown Soldier*. Too long by some twenty minutes (some scenes are superfluous, others would profit by sharper cutting), the film is nevertheless one of the cinema's finest accounts of war. It is set in the Russo-Finnish war and follows the actions of a machine-gun detachment from their gangling, amateurish beginnings to their deaths as hardened professionals in war. It is difficult to locate precisely the source of the film's compassion and its powerful indictment of the folly of war. But when the men, buoyed up by the glib arguments they could formerly mock, blindly oppose the Russian onslaught, their tragedy is starkly and pathetically exposed. This uncompromising film was made in the face of considerable financial and political pressure. It has already enjoyed a resounding success in Scandinavia and England should not be denied its ferocious and timely reminder.

In the documentary field, Japan's full-length *Karakorum*, though amateurishly made, is a fascinating account of an expedition into the Himalayas. Britain's *Oil in Pakistan* is expertly planned and shot, and marred only by a music track occasionally glib. From Germany, three outstanding works: *Die Iltiskoppel*, an intimate study of a polecat family; *Kein Platz für Wilde Tiere*, a disturbingly different survey of the Disney territory, recording the suffering occasioned to Africa's wild life by the inroads of civilisation; and *Ernst Reuter*, a moving reconstruction of the life of Berlin's well-loved mayor.

Looking back, then, the net result of this 6th Berlin Festival was ultimately rewarding. Outside the Festival, *Nuit et Brouillard*, Alain Resnais' calm reconstruction of a German concentration camp, was shown to a German audience who remained stunned and seated for a good minute after the performance. (I understand that the film has now found a courageous German distributor.) Bunuel's *Cela s'appelle l'Aurore* and Edwin Laine's *The Unknown Soldier* were accepted into the Festival after rejection by Cannes. But it is not enough for Berlin to garner the profitable publicity surrounding these interesting rejects. The challenge lies in an official recognition of their quality which, as I have already stated, this year's jury failed to register. To accept the films and subsequently disregard them performs little service and no encouragement to the independent film-maker, who is nevertheless an indispensable contributor to these occasions. For it is in the discovery of the unusual and otherwise inaccessible that the excitement of the Festivals resides. And, finally, that of the cinema too.

DEREK PROUSE



Gene Kelly's 'newspaper dance' in "If You Feel Like Singing".

After the Ball

"Why 'On the Town' is my favourite picture is because there we made the musical comedy a pure form, or we thought we did."—Gene Kelly, quoted in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Summer, 1956.

IN a review of *On the Town* in *Sequence* at the time of its first appearance in 1949, I wrote that the American Lyric Cinema had arrived: the name was perhaps somewhat highfalutin for such a light-hearted picture, but it was intended to suggest that this most exhilarating and inventive of musicals had an importance beyond its immediate—and enormous—entertainment value. For in this picture was crystallised a form whose elements could be seen developing in such diverse earlier films as *Cover Girl*, *Anchors Aweigh*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Pirate*, *Good News*: a pure form of musical comedy that was essentially a cinematic form, the equivalent of the theatrical form that had developed from *Show Boat* through *On Your Toes* to *Oklahoma!* and the original stage version of *On the Town* itself.

DAVID VAUGHAN

Tamara Toumanova and Gene Kelly in "Invitation to the Dance".



Briefly, the characteristics of the American Lyric Cinema were these: a freer and easier use of song and dance than had existed before—the numbers would arise naturally out of the action and express some emotion, whether of joy or sadness, triumph or conflict, that was germane to the story, rather than the more usual state of affairs in which everything stopped while somebody sang or danced. This new approach would inevitably involve a bolder and more imaginative attitude to settings: the numbers would not have to take place within the confines of stage-settings and ballrooms unnaturally vast, but could move with greater freedom than before—over a whole city, maybe, or (and this idea quickly became a cliché) in the imagination of one of the characters.

Unfortunately, the American Lyric Cinema, having arrived, went rapidly into a decline. The next film by Kelly and Donen in collaboration, *Singin' in the Rain*, in spite of many enjoyable moments, already showed a marked loss of spontaneity and increase in contrivance. Also the one questionable number in *On the Town*—the big ballet that rather



"The King and I": Eliza in flight from Simon Legree in the 'Siamese' ballet interpretation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

unsympathetically recapitulates the previous action—here became twice as grandiose and half as painful: it would have been reassuring at the time, no doubt, to know that Stanley Donen thinks the *Broadway Ballet* is "too far away from the really important situations of the plot", but without this knowledge one was forced to the conclusion that after the popular success of Kelly's collaboration with Minnelli in *An American in Paris*, a long and pretentious set-piece ballet of this kind was now regarded as desirable and indeed necessary as a focus for the whole film.

It was with *An American in Paris* and to a lesser extent *Singin' in the Rain*, in fact, that one began to detect in Kelly's work the beginnings of two disquieting tendencies that are now to be seen at their most marked in *Invitation to the Dance*—and since this film is one over which he had almost exclusive personal control, it is difficult to resist the assumption that they are directly attributable to Kelly himself.

The first of these tendencies is partly manifest in the big ballet numbers already mentioned: a conscious striving after art, that results inevitably (in a mass entertainment medium) in the production of *kitsch*. *Invitation to the Dance* consists of three ballets of the kind that seemed so misguided in the earlier films, each of them half an hour long. (The third of these, *The Magic Lamp*, is being "separately" released in this country). The first ballet is called *Circus* and deals with an episode in the lives of a company of *funambules* in an eighteenth century Italian setting. The story is very similar to that of *Petrouchka*: the clown (Kelly) loves the pretty equestrienne (Claire Sombert), but she is in love with the high-wire walker (Igor Youskevitch). The story ends in tragedy when the clown tries unsuccessfully to emulate his rival's prowess on the high wire. Apart from its pointlessly melodramatic climax, this is a fairly acceptable story; choreographically, however, the ballet is not well constructed: the passages of pantomime (in an exaggerated style reminiscent of silent films) do not blend with the conventional classic *pas de deux* and variations assigned to Sombert and Youskevitch, and yet a third style is introduced in the fairly long *demi-caractère* number danced by Kelly and eight harlequins (this is the best passage in the film from the dance point of view, however). All the same, this ballet would not be displeasing—the element of *kitsch* is less obtrusive here, the Callottesque costumes by Elizabeth Haffenden are charm-

ing, and there is a distinguished score by Ibert—were it not for the all too pervasive presence of the second of the tendencies in Kelly's recent work that I mentioned above.

We are told that when Kelly appeared on the San Francisco Museum series he said that if he were dancing for a university dance group he might do "some psychological comment on the death of my mother". One wonders if Kelly realises just how much of a "psychological comment" on its creator any dance must be, especially if he himself dances it. It is a critic's painful duty to state that this first section of *Invitation to the Dance* is made acutely embarrassing by the element of self-indulgence displayed in Kelly's own performance—a characteristic more nakedly exposed in dancing than in any other kind of self-expression. It would need a dancer-mime of the most profound tragi-comic powers to carry off this role, and Kelly has made a grave mistake if he has allowed himself to be persuaded that he is an artist of this calibre.

Kitsch is rampant in the second ballet, *Ring Around the Rosy*—a "modern" ballet whose story is lifted from *La Ronde*, with designs by Rolf Gerard and a score consisting of a series of fairly predictable variations on the nursery tune. Once again the choreography moves through several different styles, from the not quite edged enough social satire of the cocktail party and the crooner through the classic duet of Claude Bessy and Youskevitch to the more familiar Kelly styles used in Tommy Rall's flashy tap solo and in the two jazz duets, one jitterbug (in which Diana Adams is wasted), the other blues. Connoisseurs of the grotesque will not want to miss this last, in which we are treated to the remarkable spectacle of Tamara Toumanova as a Streetwalker, dancing a "sexy" duet with Kelly as a Marine.

The Magic Lamp, to a jazzed-up *pot-pourri* from *Scheherazade*, is another experiment with cartoon and live action similar to that in *Anchors Aweigh*. That was very charming; this seems just pointlessly ingenious and endlessly repetitive.

All in all, it is hard to resist the conclusion that *Invitation to the Dance* is an almost unmitigated failure. Perhaps Kelly's ideal of an all-dance film (something we should all like to see successfully realised) is not attainable within the limitations of commercial Hollywood production. As it is, the film suffers needlessly from being shown in "Metroscope"—it was made, of course, for what Kelly so justly calls "the classic proportions" of the old screen.

2

What of the other film-makers who might have been expected to contribute to the American Lyric Cinema? Minnelli's *The Band Wagon* was almost up to his old standards; *Brigadoon* on the other hand looks forward to a dismal era of photographed stage musicals. Kelly's collaborator Stanley Donen proved that he has a very sympathetic individual talent in one or two minor films, notably *Love Is Better Than Ever* with its affectionate satire of the small-town dancing school, and *Give a Girl a Break*, a really charming picture in the "traditional" form of the backstage musical, in which the plot serves as the merest pretext for a series of effervescent numbers. (We have presumably seen the last of the small-budget MGM musical, of which this and *I Love Melvin* were such enjoyable examples.) It is too bad that *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* had to be made in CinemaScope—the change in production policy evidently robbed us of a really original musical. As it is, the brilliance of Michael Kidd's numbers had to be weighed against such disadvantages as hideously studious sets and some pretty frightening colour photography. None the less, the film's success may be measured by the fact that it has already been imitated.

On the Town too has led to so many films with a similar structure (three sailors on leave creating havoc over an entire city) that it may almost be said to have originated another "traditional" form: *Hit the Deck* was at least enjoyable for its Youmans tunes and some of its players, while Richard Quine's *All Ashore* and *So This is Paris* are two variations

that in the exuberance and resource of their handling of familiar themes looked forward to this director's delightful *My Sister Eileen*. *It's Always Fair Weather*, on the other hand, was a lack-lustre variation on its makers' original ideas that seems to lend force to one's suspicion that the great days of the MGM musical are past. Incidentally, Donen has now left the studio to make *Funny Face* (appetisingly described as an "intimate" musical) for Paramount, with Astaire and Audrey Hepburn.

I should like here to pay tribute to Fred Astaire, who is a happily still active refutation of Kelly's statement that dancing and the motion picture are not well suited to each other: Astaire, indeed, is an American Lyric Cinema in himself. Like many other great stars, Astaire does not always appear in vehicles that are worthy of his talents, yet his career is an example to those who consciously strive after art: Astaire, who has always been content to remain a hoofer and looks rather uncomfortable surrounded by the trappings of a Roland Petit ballet, has achieved, in his nonchalant, debonair, and elegant precision, something that is as surely art and as essentially American as the national ballet style that Balanchine found in his American dancers and brought to perfection in such artists as Tanaquil LeClerc and Jacques d'Amboise.

3

At the moment we seem to be in for a cycle of CinemaScope versions of stage musicals, led by the three Rodgers and

Hammerstein shows, *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, and *The King and I*; and *Guys and Dolls*. The degree of one's enjoyment of these films is likely to depend on how much one liked them on the stage, since there is little essential difference. *Oklahoma!* certainly gains immeasurably from having been made on location (in Arizona): there is a breathtakingly beautiful opening shot, but after this the reality of the backgrounds tends to emphasise the staginess of a script that seems to have been taken over without alteration from the original—right down to every last corny blackout gag. On the credit side are the performances of Shirley Jones and Gordon MacRae, fresh, sincere, and beautifully sung; in comedy roles Gene Nelson and Charlotte Greenwood are also excellent. Gloria Grahame, resolutely deadpan, seems eccentrically cast as Ado Annie; admirers of *The Art of Rod Steiger* will not be surprised to learn that alone of the three principals he does not have a double in the Dream Ballet. This anthology of ideas from Agnes de Mille's own works and those of Antony Tudor and Martha Graham is here expanded to exorbitant length; I preferred the girls' dance, *Many a New Day*, with its touching fluttering of *jeunes filles en fleur*, in Oliver Smith's charming early American interiors.

At least Zinnemann has been able to impose some consistency of visual style on *Oklahoma!*. The consistency of *The King and I* (directed by Walter Lang) is that of flatness—in spite of the lavish sets, the eye retains no image. What

(Continued on page 111)

"Guys and Dolls": the Crap Game number.



LONDON is practically back to her old form. Memories are revived of the days when crowds fought for the stub of Robert Taylor's cigar, thrown negligently from a Dorchester window, and of the even more legendary time when Mr. Jympson Harman could generally be found helping Valentino to escape over rooftops from the passionate fans below. Miss Marilyn Monroe has been overwhelmed with gifts of bicycles and besieged in her Surrey fastness; and while the Critics' Circle entertained Miss Joan Crawford to luncheon in the Café Royal, a hushed crowd gathered outside, breathing with heavy reverence on the shining windows of the waiting Rolls Royce. The Cult of Personality is still strong in the West.

They made an interesting double personal-appearance, rags-to-riches story in our cold summer. Few could resist, none could fail to goggle a little at the old and new face of Hollywood (where time is marked not by lines round the eyes but by footprints in cement) when both are presented at such gratifyingly close quarters.

Miss Joan Crawford, now in her late forties and seventy-odd films away from Lucille LeSueur of San Antonio, Texas, is a product of Hollywood's golden age, undiminished by new trends of deglamourisation and the mumble-grumble school of Actors' Studio neo-realism. Even at moments of starkest suffering, Miss Crawford has always remained indestructible. As the guest of honour at her Critics' Circle luncheon, she blazed cheerfully under the TV arc-lights, geranium-coloured from cartwheel hat to high heels, her scarlet dress slashed across with a red rose, and ears, throat, wrists and fingers fairly incandescent with luncheon-sized diamonds. Lollia Paulina, about whom I know nothing other than the fact that she came in like starlight, *hid* with jewels, couldn't have held a candle to Miss Crawford. This, we felt to be a Critic, was what a film star ought to look like. Miss Crawford, who later explained in an interview how she cleaned her diamonds in gin, clearly felt so too. It was the classic, unchanging formula, splendid and whole-hearted and stamped Star all the way through like Brighton Rock. No parlour tricks about being a simple home-loving girl at heart. No mouse-like shrinking under the glare of Publicity. Mrs. Alfred Steele lifted her militant, magnificent chin to the lights like a sunflower towards the morning.

Under the red hair and the red hat, the Crawford face, that epic, craggy landscape, that splendidly modelled, ruthless face with the exaggerated features of the classic mask, was not a whit outshone by the diamonds. The enormous eyes ringed with a stockade of lashes, the vast and voracious mouth, the flashing glance that for so long has sent a delicious shudder along the stalls—it's all true, just as we'd always known. Miss Crawford, fascinating compound of the Sibyl, Clytemnestra and the All-American Mature Woman, is even more positive than her screen shadow, and that's saying a great deal.

She has arrived at *The Story of Esther Costello* after a dedicated life-time of work, which at some time included winning a dancing contest at the Jack O'Lantern café and strengthening the chorus line in a musical called *Innocent Eyes*, which starred Mistinguette. Her appetite for life is clearly enormous, and her enthusiasms unbounded—she is said to have seen *Camille* thirty times, and is a tiger for work. Long may she quell us with her terrible scorn, dazzle us with her sophistication, swamp us with those gigantic tears (only Alice, when she nearly drowned the Mouse, wept to greater effect than Miss Crawford). Her name is Drama, and were she scripted by Aeschylus and lit by Rembrandt, we should still go first and foremost to see Crawford. Her latest film,

whatever it is, has never been known as anything but "the new Joan Crawford picture". That's the way we like it to be.

Where Miss Crawford has often appeared dominating those strong human stories known as Women's Films, Miss Marilyn Monroe has been fed mostly to the wolves. Hollywood's long peach-coloured dream of sex without any expense of spirit, and certainly no waste of shame, reached its tender apotheosis in the extraordinary Monroe screen personification of a baby mind peacefully at rest within a body developed *à point*. Less knowing than Mae West, less metallic than Jean Harlow, she is the Blonde of today, the candy-floss, blue-eyed heroine of the comic strip, the pneumatic nude with the mind of a daisy, the natural seductress who still sleeps alone in a little pink nursery with a diamond-eyed teddy bear for company.

Why is it that the Monroe myth has so charmed the world? What makes a thirty-year-old spun-sugar blonde, with the fluffy appeal of a postcard kitten, the object of such passionate curiosity? True, the story of Norma Jean Baker, the orphan who washed dishes, married a policeman, a baseball star and finally America's sternest intellectual playwright, and became a simple, uncomplicated symbol of sex and success, is the Cinderella plot with a few nice contemporary twists. But others have followed much the same pattern without becoming a universal obsession. Is she really witty, intelligent, financially astute, a booksy girl in Salome's minimum of clothing, a creature of flesh and blood or a Coppelia, all done by wires and bras and mirrors and Max Factor? Mr. Miller says she has a genius for getting to the heart of things, and his word can hardly be doubted.

Miss Monroe, fact or fiction, held several London conferences before retiring to study her lines behind the barricades in Surrey; and at the last of these she enslaved a hushed congregation of journalists, including the tender-hearted Mr. Kingsley Martin, pink and beaming from sheer happiness. Modestly encased from neck to knee in black, with no jewellery other than a wedding-ring, she sat behind a conference table looking for all the world like a dear little student at a difficult *viva*, an impression much enhanced by her strictly subfusc outward appearance. She got all the answers right, and anyway the examiners were too bemused and near to tears to notice. If Mayhew's Watercress Girl had been taking the stand, it couldn't have been more innocent and touching. Yes, she wanted to play Gruschenka, and Anna Christie too. She admired Mr. Richard Burton, Mr. Marlon Brando and M. Gérard Philipe very much, likewise the music of Berlioz and Beethoven. She liked to be called Mrs. Miller, but Miss Monroe was all right. She hadn't attended the Actors' Studio, had merely been an "observer", and she was prepared to observe the Old Vic as well. She weighed a hundred and twenty pounds—stripped? Why, yes, you could call it stripped. She smiled and Sir Laurence Olivier smiled and the Press smiled and wiped their misty glasses and shouted hurrah, and amid scenes of universal goodwill and rejoicing Miss Monroe vanished from the scene of a notable triumph. After Monroe, the deluge: or at least Niagara.

Crawford, like the saints, goes marching in, sure of what a star should be and wear and say and seem. Monroe, for all her clear, straightforward message, is more oblique, more elusive. She seems a perfect patient for the Identity Club, and until she decides whether it is to be a left-bank life among the artists or dinner at the Ritz with a duke and three high-echelon business executives, we must all continue the most popular parlour game of the moment and keep guessing.

Joan Crawford

To mark the occasion of Joan Crawford's first visit to London for more than twenty years, a special programme of her work was presented at the National Film Theatre on August 4. The main feature was *Mildred Pierce*, which won the actress an Academy Award; the supporting programme included extracts from some of her more recent films, including Robert Aldrich's *Autumn Leaves* (1956). Miss Crawford made personal appearances at the two evening performances and spoke frankly and gaily about her career and her personal preferences. These included—favourite film: *Summer Madness*; favourite leading man: Clark Gable; most lovable personality: Pauline Frederick; favourite director: "the one who directs me best"; favourite role: "the latest one," but really Janie in *Dancing Lady*. Photograph by John Deakin.



Marilyn Monroe

A scene from *Bus Stop*, the play by William Inge adapted by George Axelrod and directed by Joshua Logan, in which Marilyn Monroe plays a café singer who falls in love with a cowboy.





"The Searchers": Vera Miles, Olive Carey and John Qualen

Film Reviews

THE SEARCHERS

GREAT men who fail habitually achieve more than lesser men who succeed; and films by great directors that miss their mark are often more interesting—more meaningful—than spotless but commonplace successes. We saw this recently with Mark Donskoi's new version of *Mother*, a film obviously worked on with the greatest care by a fine director, with beautiful and characteristic things in it. Yet the parts did not coalesce and the essential theme never came alive. How so? we ask; and in asking we come to understand Donskoi better: and perhaps the cinema as well.

It is the same with *The Searchers* (Warners). As Donskoi's return to Gorki whetted our expectations, so does Ford's return to the West, to Monument Valley, to those beloved mesas which dominate the landscapes of *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. We are back again in that beautiful but daunting world of isolated frontier farms, marauding Indians, hardy pioneers. Surely Ford has only to be set at liberty here

for him to give us something memorable, something heartening, another glimpse of that unique vision? *The Searchers* certainly begins with a promise: the camera tracking out of the dark homestead interior, following the hesitant figure of a woman, out into sunshine, a vast sandy desert world, blue sky, distant rocks, and an approaching horseman. As the lonely rider draws nearer, the whole family emerge and stand watching with anxious curiosity: how many weeks—months—is it since they saw a stranger? The scene is presented with Ford's familiar incisiveness and dignity of composition, made vivid by human detail: the panting mongrel dog, the wind blowing the women's skirts, the hand held up against the glare of the sun. And yet somehow, curiously, the effect is cold. . . .

It is a difficult effect to analyse; and perhaps impossible. Absence of feeling, of inner conviction, is just a fact, whatever the cause. Again and again in *The Searchers* there are moments, incidents even, that recall past splendours: the Jorgensen family grouped in front of their farm stand like Muley's family in *The Grapes of Wrath* before the tractor comes crashing through. The shadow that falls across the child hiding from the Indians by her grandmother's grave recalls a similar shadow falling across Nathan Brittles in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. There is a farcical fight that takes us back to *The Quiet Man*. But a lack of intensity in all these echoes reminds us that it is not enough just to set Ford down among the mesas with a large budget: he has to have a story—or at least a theme. And the story of *The Searchers* (based on a novel by Alan LeMay) does not turn out to be a good one for him. In the first place there is too much of it. The pictures Ford has himself produced in the last ten years (and they comprise all his important work since *My Darling Clementine*) have relied less and less on narrative, concentrated more and more on mood. *The Searchers* is a long and complicated story, spread over eight or nine years. Moreover its hero, Ethan Edwards, is an unmistakable

neurotic, devoured by an irrational hatred of Indians and half-breeds, shadowed by some mysterious crime. His search for his little niece who has been abducted by Comanches seems, indeed, to be inspired less by love or honour than by the obsessive desire to do her to death, as a contaminated creature. Now what is Ford, of all directors, to do with a hero like this? One is reminded of his previous failure, in *Fort Apache*, to make anything of a story centred on a bitter and obsessed character. And here similarly disjointed rhythm and uneven playing betray the director's unease with his subject.

The only way, one would have thought, that Ford could give such a story significance was to make its hero not Edwards but Martin Pawley, the young half-breed, adopted son of the slaughtered family, who doggedly accompanies him on the search, determined to save the girl's life. At least here is a character who stands for something, and it is likeably played by Jeffrey Hunter; but the direction gives the boy no stature. It is John Wayne, as Edwards, who stands firmly at the centre of the film; and his performance lacks either complexity or consistency. Instead of complexity, we get occasional nastiness alternating with guarded but essentially genial humour. The moods of the film are equally uneven. The drama of the girl's discovery is followed by a slapstick fight which completely destroys any tension in the situation or characters. Pawley's Indian "wife", delightfully introduced, is suddenly sent rolling down a hillside by a violent kick in the back (a particularly, and unnecessarily, coarse touch). Any excitement there might have been in the climax is punctured by a lot of good-natured, quite unserious fooling with a green young cavalry officer (played by John Wayne's son). The acting is very up-and-down: Vera Miles is a spirited but rather modern heroine, Hank Worden as the pathetic half-crazed Mose is frankly amateurish, and for the first time (to my knowledge) an Indian chief in a Ford picture is played by a white actor in make-up. The only really authentic performance is that of Olive Carey as a brave and hardy frontier wife.

The Searchers in fact shows very clearly how Ford is a director with whom things are either right or wrong. When the feeling is true, it is also deep, powerful and suggestive. When belief is lacking, not all the technique in the world can hide the fact. There is even a certain pride in him which refuses to simulate: when his story reaches a point where only dishonesty can conceal an essential falsity—he simply films it, throws it in our faces, saying, "If this is what you want—take it!" All the climax of *The Searchers*, with its preposterous rescue and Edwards' unbelievable change of heart, is like this. The extraordinary thing is that he gets away with it. "The finest Western since *Stagecoach*", someone writes; or "Joins *Stagecoach* and *Shane* in my list of classic Westerns". The Old Man's smile must be rather wry if he ever reads his press cuttings.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

THE KILLING

NOW that its title has been changed from *Bed of Fear* (as it was called when I wrote about Stanley Kubrick's last picture in *SIGHT AND SOUND*) to *The Killing*, one need really have no reservations at all. This shrewd, engrossing, complete-in-itself melodrama is the kind of film one had begun to think was no longer possible to make in Hollywood.

A success in itself, it becomes an even more definite one in perspective. All art is entertainment, but all entertainment is not art; and the likeliest approach to art is by way of entertainment—letting art take you, in fact, by surprise. Until a few years ago, many American film-makers proved this. They showed a unique talent for the kind of entertainment that assumed the dimensions of art, almost as a by-product, through the fresh, intuitive, original way they handled familiar material.

Thinking back over the many American comedies and thrillers one has enjoyed, one realises how narrowly—almost impossibly, one might say now—their themes were restricted. Yet the characters and their worlds survive. The gentle eccentrics of La Cava's comedies and the more violent ones of Sturges': the enclosed, sometimes bizarre criminal communities of *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Asphalt Jungle*; the "nice" family and social groups in the shadow of a menacing intruder, that Hitchcock used to observe so ironically (in *Suspicion* and *Shadow of a Doubt*) before inflation set in—all these have a finality, a justness of proportion and effect,

because the makers knew their level and willingly kept to it.

Today in Hollywood there is much confused aspiration, and a pretentiousness that seems to stem from a horrible mixture of egomania, fear and revolt. It has resulted in some disturbing new styles, half-baked and over-elaborate sociology, as in *Trial*, *On the Waterfront*, *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, and (when caps are set at Europe) stilted *art nouveau*, as in *Moulin Rouge*, *The Barefoot Contessa* or *Moby Dick*. Elephantiasis, abetted perhaps but not created by CinemaScope, seems to have afflicted so many directors. Their films suggest a belief that everything they touch will turn to Greek drama. They can make anything important, and will crush a simple thriller situation like *The Desperate Hours* or a light, astringent musical like *Guys and Dolls* under the weight of meaningless grandiosity. Carefully, lengthily dredging their material of spontaneity, aiming all too grimly at art, they end with neither art nor entertainment.

The appearance of a film like *Drive a Crooked Road*, or *The Marrying Kind*, or *Marty*, or even *The Trouble with Harry* adds surprise to pleasure. Neurotic terror of simplicity is replaced by a straightforward confidence in the material, the characters (or, in Hitchcock's case, the corpses), by direct communication. For once we are not compelled to peer through a series of expensive poker-work screens.

So it is with *The Killing* (United Artists). Its story reminds us of many, but its imaginative telling makes us forget. All that happens is that a gang, which includes an ex-convict, an ex-alcoholic, a dishonest cop and a track bartender, plans to rob the tellers' office on the day of a big race. The emphasis is less on physical tension than on the psychological strains imposed. An ingenious narrative device, revealing the action backwards and forwards in time during the few hours preceding the robbery, fastens on the various motives and stresses of intrigue. The anxious little small-time gangster is bound to boast to his sluttish discontented wife, as she is bound to betray his information to her on-the-side lover, a rival gangster; the ex-convict's fading, devoted girl-friend has to buy airline tickets to Mexico City and then just wait and hope this really will be Johnny's last job; the nervous bartender has to take the machine-gun hidden in a long flower carton into the racetrack locker room, leave it there for the morning, and watch that no one discovers its contents; the dishonest cop has to pacify a menacing creditor until the robbery is over and he gets his share; and the lonely ex-alcoholic sits in his room, wishing vaguely that Johnny were his son and they might take a holiday together.

So, as it nears breaking point, a shabby, greedy, furtive and treacherous little world is opened up. The robbery succeeds, but rival gang warfare breaks out and the carnage is spectacular. Johnny and his girl, at the moment of escaping with the money, are trapped by a cruel coincidence. Stanley Kubrick, who also wrote



"The Killing": Elisha Cook, Jr., and Marie Windsor.



Melina Mercouri in "Stella".

the script (from a novel by Lionel White called *Clean Break*), is equally successful with the vivid, ferocious outbursts of melodrama and the examinations of character. For the action sequences his camera style is abrupt and explosive. Sharp cutting, swift movement, create a series of incisive, surprising images—Johnny in a macabre rubber mask holding up the tellers, the storm of dollar bills that blows across the airfield at night, and (in a sequence that has been slightly abridged in the British version) the silence after the gunfight and the untidy pattern of corpses on the living-room floor.

For the character-scenes, Kubrick relies often on simple long takes that extract full meaning from what is said, the way people look at each other, their involuntary and calculated gestures. There is a dialogue between the little hood (Elisha Cook, Jr.) and his impatient wife (Marie Windsor) as they sip coffee at four o'clock on the morning before the robbery. They sit facing each other across the table; an alarm clock ticks; in their tired alertness, her careful probing and his prickly suspicion, the camera finds a brilliant completeness.

These are the pleasures of a story well told, an aware and inventive use of the black and white screen. All the main players (Sterling Hayden, Coleen Gray, Jay C. Flippen, Ted de Corsia, as well as the two mentioned) are good, and there is a splendid "natural", Kola Kwarian, who appears as a chess-loving Greek wrestler employed by the gang. At 28, Kubrick has achieved a sureness of touch unequalled by any other young Hollywood director today. He is also in an enviable position, with a producer who part-finances his films and thereby assures him independence. Armed, in fact, with independence of spirit as well as of resources, he provides a very necessary threat.

GAVIN LAMBERT

STELLA

A SECOND film, like a second novel, can be a formidable professional hurdle. The critics, having recognised promise, are now looking out for achievement; something of the range and extent, as well as the quality, of a director's talent can now be expected to disclose itself. From this point of view Michael Cacoyannis' *Stella* (Intercontinental) is a notably encouraging picture. More ambitious than his agreeable *Windfall in Athens*, the film cuts more deeply into life; the director has a firmer grip on his material, a more accurate sense of its possibilities.

Although it retains something of the gaiety, the enjoyment of living, that characterised *Windfall in Athens*, *Stella* is in essence a melodrama with intermittent aspirations towards tragedy. The director's problem is to make credible a plot of almost operatic extravagance by firmly anchoring it in its contemporary setting. Stella, a singer in a back-street café, is a victim of her own pride, her passionate determination to retain her independence, to experience life on her own terms. She abandons one lover, who later dies; and she is herself killed when she becomes too deeply involved with a man as reckless and uncompromising as herself. The situations, in fact, owe little to the contemporary scene: the respectable young man whom Stella throws over is a modern dress

Armand Duval, while Stella herself might belong to the period of *La Dame aux Camellias*. If this story (adapted by Cacoyannis from a Greek play) is made workable, it is because the emphasis rests squarely on its strong central character. The men (Georges Foundas as the passionate footballer, Aleko Alexandrakis as the romantic young bourgeois) exist only in terms of their relationships with Stella, to whom Melina Mercouri brings a harsh and fiery temperament and a roughly decisive technique.

In gearing his narrative to a high emotional pitch, Cacoyannis at times over-reaches himself. His feeling for the Greek scene, for the gaiety and melancholy of city life, is unmistakable. Details of background—the café with its watchful proprietress, the solemn line of dancers at a village wedding, the picnic in the olive groves, the glaring city sunlight—are sharply and directly recorded. But the director also falls into the trap of the over-calculated, inexpertly realised effect. A sequence of frenetic cross-cutting between two dancing couples is awkward in the extreme; a sudden use of a tilted camera angle seems merely a piece of exhibitionist technique. There are few subtleties in *Stella*, a film that essentially depends on the vitality of its director and its leading actress, and it is when the film's style seems most derivative that we sense a forcing of the emotional pressure. One has little doubt, though, that this is the work of a director of developing talent—rough, undisciplined, lacking in emotional definition, and full of promise. The Paris Pullman cinema, which played *Stella* with the Indian *Two Acres of Land* (reviewed some months ago in SIGHT AND SOUND), is to be congratulated on a notably enterprising double bill.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

WEDDING BREAKFAST

LIKE *Marty*, *Wedding Breakfast* (M-G-M) is based on a play by the ace television writer Paddy Chayefsky, although in this case another writer, Gore Vidal, has adapted the screenplay. The setting is again the Bronx, and all the references are much the same as in the earlier film, except that here the characters are not Italian but Irish. The plot of the film is simple enough. A young couple decide to get married—quietly. Their families at first accept this but, as social pressures are exerted, they determine to give the couple the "white wedding" that convention demands. Chayefsky uses plot, however, only as a frame for one portrait—the girl's Irish mother. In her determination that her daughter shall have a wedding breakfast, her whole life and the barren web of her relationships (especially with her taxi-driver husband, played by Ernest Borgnine) are bared and scrutinised. Proud, affectionless, lonely, driven and bound by the empty conventions of her petty bourgeois world, she is the real concern of the film.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Wedding Breakfast* is the mutual influences of television and Hollywood. Television has prescribed the emphasis and scale of the film and has contributed, as well as the subject, many of the cast. The growth of television has in fact given Hollywood the possibility of something like neo-realistic casting. It has developed an enormously diverse range of character actors, who are at the same time thoroughly, earnestly professional. Their very earnestness has in turn influenced their Hollywood counterparts, so that the film is not merely cast with welcome precision and freshness but is played throughout with uncommon care. The boy (Don Taylor), and above all the girl's friend (Joan Camden, in a performance of extraordinary, melting sympathy) stand out from a sound and vigorous cast.

Hollywood's contributions, on the other hand, are director and star. Richard Brooks has always been amongst the first to climb on any prestige plus success bandwagon. It is fascinating that part of his great slickness and skill seems to have gone into giving the film a television veneer. Set-ups dictated by cramped sets, deliberately careless framing, are indications of this. Yet in most ways the film is more ably directed than *Marty*; and in one sequence at least, the tender and abortive love scene between the boy and girl, it reaches a fine intensity of feeling. *Marty*'s success, however, lay in part in its very limitations, which were never overstepped or questioned. It is just this that Brooks does constantly—and fatally—and nowhere are the limitations more acutely challenged than in the casting of Bette Davis. Up to a point this works surprisingly well. The cold stare, the tight voice, the blank mask, the inflexible battering down of all emotion, even an Irish accent—all this she brings off easily, and only an occasional inflection betrays her. Yet in the end her natural qualities are against her. At her greatest she suppresses emotion, and then strikes home with a suddenness unsurpassed by any other actress by implying it

in one welling look. Direct emotion, however, eludes her. She copes with it, often magnificently, but always with consciousness and effort. At the end of the film, the mother is forced to acknowledge the emptiness of her own life. She sits, beyond tears, plaiting her hair before her mirror. In the beautiful and careful pattern she creates with twisting hands and hair, we can only recognise the supreme virtuoso. For addicts this must surely be one of her most splendid creations. Yet, in this context, it works against the tone of the film.

Perhaps one of the most significant things about the performance is the comment it makes, obliquely, on Chayefsky's own contribution. His talent needs the strictest discipline to survive, and one suspects that he lacks the artistic strength to impose this from within. His is the weakness of the generalised emotional attitude. He intrudes his pity on all he creates, so that his characters or situations seem created to illustrate an attitude, rather than for their own sake. It is hard to be critically generous enough, to recognise the genuineness of the observation, because all the time he asks for the highest critical sights. (Just how high, we realise when we are asked to accept the slickly novelettish resolution, and two scenes of nauseating superficiality between the girl's uncle and an Irish widow he is courting.) In this he is, for all the dissimilarities, not unlike Zavattini. Unfortunately he has not had a de Sica to transcend him.

TONY RICHARDSON.

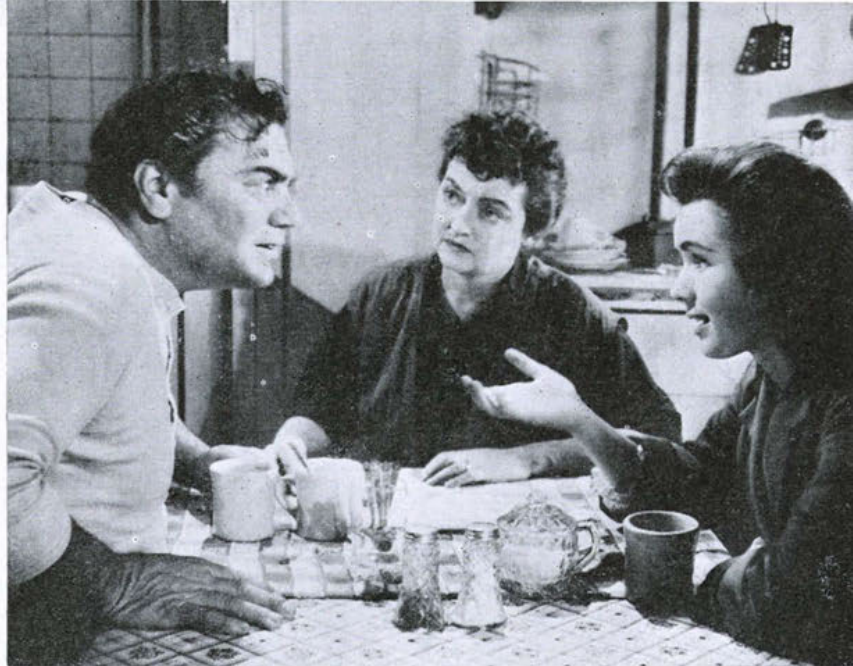
THE MAN IN THE GREY FLANNEL SUIT

UNNALLY JOHNSON's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (Fox) is the latest and the largest of Hollywood's recent investigations into the mystique of big business. Ambitious in presentation and in the ground it covers, it has the interest of the "big" production that is also in its way something of a sociological document. English critics have boggled chiefly at the film's basic premise, that \$7,000 a year is barely enough to live on, and that a large and well-equipped house (even though the washing machine is broken) must be considered as a symbol of defeat, "the graveyard of happiness, ambition and fun". Within an American frame of reference the need for \$10,000 is credible enough; the house, though, is not bad by any standards.

The first hour of this lengthy film is taken up with Betsy's efforts to nag Tom (non-committally played by Gregory Peck) into getting a better job. Once he has got it, however, she proclaims that it wasn't really money she wanted, or even the new house: she only wanted to rouse him to go out and fight for something better. But soon she is at him again for being too cynical (as if that were possible) about his new career: "I'm tired of being bright, brittle and broke". And when he later has to risk the job by telling the truth about one of the boss's pet projects, she righteously assures him that integrity is more important than money. He reminds her at this point that integrity is a good deal easier if you have money in the bank (a curious echo of Brecht!). Nevertheless integrity wins out: he tells the boss the truth and keeps the job.

If Johnson had contented himself with this much, we might have had an adequate and moderately revealing, if superficial, film about a suburban wife, nagging yet not unscrupulous, driving her husband on to better things. Unfortunately, he has been more ambitious. In an attempt to produce a "round" character, he expands the novel's flashback episodes, and we see at length the wartime experiences that are supposed to have left their mark on Tom. For according to Betsy (Jennifer Jones at her most intense), he has become "gutless"; their caresses are loveless; their passion without emotion. (This is simply stated some thirty minutes before the end of the film, never conveyed dramatically.) She also complains that all he ever thinks about is money—this from her! What were the experiences that supposedly produced such changes? He knifed a German soldier to steal his overcoat, he killed his best friend by accident, and he had a love affair with an Italian girl. What effect these episodes in fact had on him remains mysterious, except in so far as they form the basis of his repertoire of day-dreams.

The affair with the girl is the best example of an underlying confusion that seems to exist in the director's mind not only as to what the film is trying to say, but even as to what it is about. Tom has been told just before he pulls out of Rome that Maria (touchingly played by Marisa Pavan) is going to have a child. After the end of the war, he no longer even thinks of her: he loved Maria, as he tells his wife, only "the way things were then". It is hard to see how such an affair can be considered to have "marked" his life. Moreover, when he learns eleven years later



Bronx family: Ernest Borgnine, Bette Davis and Debbie Reynolds in "Wedding Breakfast".

that Maria and his son are in need of money, his first reaction is fear that she might sue him for the support of the child. He quickly reassures himself, however, with the thought that he could always make out a good case in court for her having been a common prostitute! Generously, though, he gives up this idea; and Betsy, after a terrific struggle with herself, agrees that they should send money for the child's upkeep. She is then assured that there will be no direct contact with Maria: the whole thing will be done hygienically through the kindly old judge.

And who is the kindly old judge? The survivor of a completely irrelevant sub-plot having to do with a contested will. Somewhat more to the point is the other sub-plot dealing with Tom's boss (well played by Fredric March), the familiar big business chief who has sacrificed wife and family in his struggle for success.

In its length and multiplicity of incident, the film was presumably an attempt to "think big", as they say on Madison Avenue. But this adaptation of Sloan Wilson's sprawling best-seller has sacrificed consistency of plot and unity of theme to the desire for sheer size. Technically flat, progressing through a series of dialogue scenes that gain nothing from CinemaScope, the film's significance is less in the treatment than in the subject itself—in the "values" the characters apparently stand for, and in the uncertainty with which they are expressed.

RICHARD ROUD.

REACH FOR THE SKY

As a young man, Douglas Bader was gay, adventurous and passionately devoted to flying. A serious air accident in the early 'thirties necessitated the amputation of both his legs, but, undeterred, he learnt to fly again, distinguished himself in the Second World War, and after he was shot down so enraged the Germans that as a last resort he was sent to Colditz. This tale of almost superhuman tenacity, as recorded in Paul Brickhill's biography, can hardly fail to impress; but Lewis Gilbert's film adaptation of *Reach for the Sky* (JARFID), in its concern to observe all the rules of British screen biographies, falls somewhat short of a complete portrait.

A little humour, some carefully calculated emotional scenes, much slangy dialogue and some protracted air battles serve as a background to the central character study; the changing social atmosphere of the period is merely hinted at. Given stronger and more perceptive moulding by the director, these disparate elements might have been fused into an impressive whole; in the event, a generally dispassionate approach, plus the prevailing reluctance of British film-makers to commit themselves to a truly personal statement, reduces the film's impact. Even if one takes into consideration the inevitable compromises involved in presenting the story of a living person, comparatively few glimpses of the man behind the character are allowed to break through. Bader's irascibility is converted into a sort of dogged, pipe-smoking stubbornness; many of the living, revealing rough-edges are smoothed away, leaving only a likeable, headstrong R.A.F. air ace. Within the limits of this conception, Kenneth More's impersonation is extremely conscientious and full of easy charm.

He is particularly successful in the early episodes, including the hospital scenes and those showing Bader's first painful experiments with his artificial legs: here one is made to feel a genuine emotional involvement with a real person.

If the drawbacks inherent in this type of biographical *homage* are only partially overcome in *Reach for the Sky*, its lessons are obvious. As a tribute to the human spirit and its will to survive, the film undoubtedly impresses; but good intentions and authentic heroics are not quite enough. One is never allowed to enter the inner world of its hero's emotions: consequently one admires—but from the outside.

JOHN GILLETT

ON THE BOWERY

"I do not bow to you personally, but to suffering humanity in your person". Thus Raskolnikov to Sonia. Thus, too, Lionel Rogosin to the people of the lower depths to whom his deeply compassionate film is in its entirety dedicated. *On the Bowery* is neither a propaganda film nor a piece of reportage. It is a film made from the inside, in the way Flaherty made *Nanook* and *Moana*. Rogosin and his associates (who include Mark Sufrin, writer, and Richard Bagley, who photographed *The Quiet One*) have identified themselves as film-makers with the appalling collection of human catastrophes they have chosen to depict. Rogosin himself spent several years in attaining this identification.

Nearly all the scenes and sequences of the film have a quality of conviction which can only come from this observation from the inside. Many of the scenes must have been staged. But "staging" is hardly the right description, because Rogosin has managed to include his camera among the dead-beat down-and-out alcoholics of Skid Row. In the bars and on the sidewalks, the camera leans sympathetically across table or grating towards these men and women who have passed the point of no return, and have reached a hideous sort of happiness achieved at best by gin and whisky, and at worst (when purchasing power has gone) by a shared squeeze from a can of metal-polish. We are with these people, and we hear what they say: the dialogue, if that is the right word, is quite wonderful. And Rogosin insists that we must love them; he seems to say, with Dostoevsky, that "the sense of their own degradation is as essential to those reckless unbridled natures as the sense of their own generosity".

On the Bowery is only moderately well edited, and there are moments when the music (admirable in itself) seems an intrusion.

But the visuals, no less than the searing casualness of the dialogue, are in themselves so strong that the whole work hangs together with a sort of desperate sincerity that is stronger and more effective than all the technical spit-and-polish in the world. The briefing given by the janitor of the Bowery Mission to the evening's clientele is shot dead straight to camera. It breaks the rules, as did Ruby Grierson and John Taylor when they shot *Housing Problems* in the East End. Again, the woman in the bar who is "never going back, never going back"—where to she does not and need not specify—has reached a point at which the existence of a film camera a few yards away could not be of even academic interest to her. One may note too, over and over again, activities going on, often slightly out of focus, in the background of a shot—activities which have the significance that comes not so much from eavesdropping as from the terror of a reality seen by mistake from the corner of the eye.

I am now aware that this is not turning out to be a nice clean efficient film review. Perhaps this is because *On the Bowery* is not, thank goodness, a nice clean efficient film. Indeed, phrases like "not for the squeamish" have appeared in several criticisms I have read. Such phrases are irrelevant and misleading, unless you apply the same ruling to Dostoevsky's work—no apologies by the way for the constant references. The fact is that compassion is a rare element in films. We have seen it sometimes—in Donskoi, in the earlier parts of Pudovkin's *Deserter*, in parts of *The Grapes of Wrath*, perhaps in Dovshenko and certainly in Jennings' *Fires Were Started*. And now Rogosin—in the first film he has ever made. He deserves our salutations.

Ray, one of the two principal characters in *On the Bowery*, is in fact a young man of essential intelligence. When we see him in these lower depths we know, with him, that he still has the capacity to emerge from them, not temporarily but for ever. Why then does Rogosin, in his frightening final sequence—in which Ray becomes almost a part of a portrait gallery of lost souls—refuse to indicate a happy ending? The answer is, surely, that he cannot in honesty try to act the prophet one way or the other. He leaves Ray as he has found him—prognosis doubtful, dice loaded, anything goes. "It is not God I don't accept, Alyosha" (said Ivan Karamazov) "only I must respectfully return him my entrance ticket." Very few films reach this area of thought and feeling. *On the Bowery* most certainly does.

PS. Nobody here, during the Golden Age of British documentary, ever stuck their noses or cameras into the Gorbals.

BASIL WRIGHT

In Brief

SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT (*Films de France*). Since becoming internationally known as the author of Alf Sjöberg's *Frenzy*, Ingmar Bergman has made (usually as writer and director) a number of films dealing with the passions of youth. The pervading mood of these films—innocence is often despoiled by the innate evil in others—has recently been replaced by the brutish melodramatics and determined eroticism of a film like *Sawdust and Tinsel*. Now, in *Sommarnattens Leende* (*Smiles of a Summer Night*) he has attempted an intimate study in period *amours*, which, in subject matter, occasionally recalls *La Ronde* or *Occupe-Toi D'Amélie* played straight. The main action takes place during a country house party attended by numerous husbands, wives and mistresses. The complex sexual manoeuvrings which occupy most of the long summer night end in a mutually acceptable pairing off of the principal characters, with the child-wife of the fickle lawyer eloping with her husband's son of a former marriage! Rejecting a bitter-sweet romanticism, Bergman views his lovers with a cold, almost Strindbergian detachment; for him, love's roundabout is painful, bitter and not to be trusted. When humour and irony intrude, they are usually transformed into a macabre comment on the penalties of desire—the lawyer is forced to leave his mistress's apartment in a nightshirt, and is later challenged by his rival, a fiery count, to a game of Russian roulette with a revolver containing one blank cartridge. As an additional turn of the screw, Bergman deploys his tormented characters against backgrounds of extreme beauty. Gunnar Fischer's luminous images of country house, rivers and gardens, coupled with some elegant decor and costuming, evoke a rich period atmosphere. The handling of the players is also stylish and assured, Eva Dahlbeck, in particular, creating a vivid portrait as the cigar-smoking mistress of both count and lawyer. In a

personal statement recently quoted in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Bergman said that his purpose in film-making is "to express, in an entirely subjective manner, the ideas that are part of my conscience". On the evidence of his past work, he is clearly a director of considerable technical fluency and invention. Eut, despite the fleeting glimpses of pity and affection in this latest film, the prevailing mood remains defiantly cynical and jaundiced.—JOHN GILLETT.

THE WICKED GO TO HELL (*Miracle*) and **THE HEROES ARE TIRED** (*Films de France*). Bloody mouths and crushed insects seem increasingly to be the trademarks of the contemporary French cinema. As Clouzot's disciples multiply, each dredges a little deeper than his predecessor. The first film by Robert Hossein, *The Wicked Go to Hell*, shows him to be a competent and assured director; but it also shows a fashionably relentless insistence on repugnant physical detail.

Two convicts (Serge Reggiani and Henri Vidal), after escaping from gaol in a corpse-strewn and tensely handled sequence, kill an artist living in an isolated hut near the sea-shore. His young mistress (Marina Vlady) plays off each against the other—though at one point carelessly allowing herself to be raped—until she can encourage both to walk into some convenient quicksands.

It would be easier to complain about the waste of talent on such dismal nonsense if it were not so chillingly clear that the director knows precisely what he is doing. A quivering, half-dead dog can be more shocking on the screen than a human corpse, and Hossein knows it. His opening reels contain an execution, a suicide, a beating-up, a torture scene, several quite casual killings, and a strip-tease by a convict forced by the other prisoners to impersonate his dancer wife. It is the sheer pointlessness of *The Wicked Go to*



"On the Bowery"

Hell, though, that is ultimately overwhelming. Its atmosphere of futility seems even to infect the players. Reggiani's forcefulness is little defence against the script (by Hossein and René Wheeler) and Marina Vlady's disturbing presence is submerged in an almost Teutonic mysticism. With the exception of Jacques Duby's sensitive cashier, the remaining performances (including Hossein's Fred, the most ruthless of the convicts) are marked by a brittle determination.

Salauds or heros, the *malaise* is the same. Even cynicism becomes half-hearted. Yves Ciampi's tired heroes are ex-enemy pilots (French and German), adrift in a Black Republic and plotting for a loot of stolen diamonds—which are finally and inevitably lost to everyone.

Even in this version (the film has apparently been heavily cut for showing in this country, and is in consequence none too easy to follow), the prevailing atmosphere is violent, clammy and repellent. A spider is squashed with the heel of a woman's shoe; the mutual seduction of Rivière (Yves Montand) and Manuella (Maria Felix) is sodden with perspiration; fights sprawl into chicken runs and into the sea; and long, lingering sequences attempt to nudge us into anger at the sight of Europeans waiting on Africans. Despite its own anxious denials, *The Heroes are Tired* seems nostalgic for the certainties of war. And again the aimlessness of the film finds its reflection in the playing, with Yves Montand carrying his tired face like an emblem of disinterestedness.

Neither of these two films has a moment of charm or humour; neither possesses any really likeable characters. Their philosophy is not grey bewilderment or black despair, but a murky thing bred out of pointless violence. Buried beneath the bleeding bodies, though, lie two competent talents: and it is because of this—because this is the kind of material which at present engages so

many of the younger French directors—that the films acquire their disquieting significance.—DEREK HILL.

THE SOLID GOLD CADILLAC (*Columbia*). The story of the innocent who triumphs over the rich and powerful still holds its place in contemporary American folk-lore. It was the essence of Capraism, it turned up again in *Born Yesterday*, and in *The Solid Gold Cadillac* it is the small stockholder from the suburbs, with her ten shares, her insatiable curiosity and her firm grasp of basic issues, who effortlessly confounds the group of mildly corrupt business men controlling a vast New York corporation. The play by George S. Kaufman and Howard Teichmann, which originally starred Josephine Hull, has been remodelled as a vehicle for Judy Holliday; and it is a disadvantage of the script that it exploits the more stereotyped aspects of what has become a familiar screen characterisation. However much one enjoys the dexterity of Judy Holliday's playing in this brand of artificial comedy, *The Marrying Kind* showed us that her range extends considerably beyond it. Her particular gift—apparent here in one or two scenes with Paul Douglas—is to suggest the touching, even heart-breaking, reality of a situation beneath its surface humour. Her heroines are always most vulnerable when their illusions are threatened.

Richard Quine, whose musicals have had charm as well as exuberance, seems rather less confident with the quieter rhythms of this comedy. The direction is neat enough, but the tone is on occasion allowed to become strident, the more manufactured aspects of the story are over-stressed. Although in the line of the Cukor-Kanin comedies, *The Solid Gold Cadillac* misses their relaxed and easy precision; it retains, however, their welcome qualities of civilised good-humour.—PENELOPE HOUSTON.

Children



"It now seems to me that the real stars are the men who make films . . ." Left, fans at London airport waiting to greet Johnnie Ray; above, girls at a secondary modern school at work on a film.

as film makers

Film-making and film-appreciation groups among school children are not innovations, and in an increasing number of schools they form part of the curriculum or are carried on as a spare-time activity. In and around Liverpool, a group of teachers is engaged in introducing the practice and theory of cinema into the school curriculum. They call their organisation the Merseyside Council for Film Appreciation, and it has the support of the local Education Authorities. This report on their current activities has been compiled from material provided by some of the teachers concerned, and edited by Lena Hodgson.

RECENTLY, on a trip to Liverpool, a film director was persuaded to visit a primary school, where a class of ten-year-olds were engaged in their last school-period of film making: they were viewing and criticising their own production, *The Black Sheep*. They projected the film for the visitors and invited comments. The film director pointed out that a shot seemed to be missing. A small girl put up her hand and said they'd been afraid that someone would notice that.

The whole class was in the film and behind the camera. The picture showed the class studying botany in a field next to a field full of sheep. One of the sheep was 'black' and would not obey the sheepdog. One of the boys was 'black' too and would not obey the teacher. The audience grew quite fond of the little villain disrupting the lesson. In the end the sheepdog cornered both 'black sheep' and the boy had to be rescued. But in the scenes of his first misdemeanour, there was no shot which identified the boy.

One boy—the author—explained: *I didn't want to show which of us was misbehaving until he was caught by the dog. (Suspense, in fact.) But when we put the film together, we wanted to share his story with him and couldn't. (Audience frustration instead of participation.) So we went back to make all the extra shots that we hadn't originally allowed for. But we ran out of film before we could make that particular shot. We hoped no-one would notice. Then, after a pause: we shan't make that mistake again. (Collapse of film director) . . .*

The children we deal with are, roughly speaking, divided into the following age and ability groups. All attend primary schools until eleven, after which some go to grammar schools to the age of sixteen or eighteen, others to technical and commercial schools, and the majority to county secondary schools which provide a general education to the age of fifteen. In schools of these various types, film-making has already proved its value. At the lowest assessment, it occupies a number of children in an activity which calls for a contribution to a joint effort, which makes them undertake a task (and to them it is a complex one), requiring logical and precise thought as well as determination. More than that, the children are forced into awareness of what they see and how people behave, when they must try to break a story down into purely visual terms. (Some experiments have been made with tape-recorded commentaries, but the films as a rule are silent.) What matters is that the film should be the children's own creation: inevitably they need help, but the film merely made by a teacher in their presence is valueless.

Other activities (dramatics, local surveys, etc.) make parallel demands, but film-making most notably calls for "active seeing". The essential aim of school film-making is to encourage children to use their eyes and their critical faculties. References, however simply phrased, to visual beauty, human behaviour and such abstractions are likely to seem so much idle sound. But when you are forced to fill the frame interestingly, and must do it in your own town or

street, you begin to become aware of the less obvious beauty and poetry in the familiar surroundings. And when your own story tails away miserably and unexcitingly, you wonder why others are more successful. That is the beginning: unimportant in itself, the film is merely a means to an end.

Although only a relatively small number can take part at any one time in actual film-making, the interest it engenders spreads. Here the connection between their own efforts, which only the most devoted parent would sit through twice, and films seen at the local cinemas, can be made through the school film society. (Their own films, incidentally, will accustom them to the appearance of early and especially silent films: a real advance has been made when an audience does not automatically laugh at the unfamiliar.) The approach to courses of film-appreciation naturally varies according to age and ability. But once discussion (not formal lecturing) begins to go beyond the comment: "That was a nice film", or "Wasn't so-and-so lovely?", the big step forward has been taken.

2

Between the ages of seven and eleven, film-making is often one of the classroom projects, allied to other school subjects. Stories and scripting can form part of English lessons, the script can be illustrated in drawing lessons, and so on. One such film was made after the 11-plus examination to provide a major interest in the term and a half before going to the new school. The children's interest had been aroused by film shows out of school hours, and they were enthusiastic to start work themselves. They were each to write stories about themselves, describing something they would like to happen at school. At first, their stories were told in snappy dialogue with little description of action; then, reminded that the film would be silent, they produced stories full of action, but luridly reminiscent of what they had seen at the cinema and not concerned with themselves at all. A third attempt resulted in the acceptable themes of a rounders game and a paper chase, which, linked together, would require little dialogue and much action and would be within their own experience.

At this point one child opportunely asked: "If we tell the story like this in words, how are we going to tell it in pictures on the screen?" and scripting practice began with the tribulations of Jack and Jill told in a series of drawings. Into the composite script for *The Paper Chase* were incorporated ideas from individual scripts—the chase winding in and out of a line of trees in the park, the 'hares' peering cautiously through the bushes to view its progress. Locations were visited to plan shots, and this aroused grave doubts as to whether they would ever be able to show the film in the correct order.

The camera was booked for four days, and shooting, all out of doors, began with a playground scene from the vantage point of the air-raid shelter roof. Most shots were taken without rehearsal; some more complicated ones were run through beforehand. The 100 feet of 16mm. film originally planned lengthened to 200 feet; and as this consisted of a number of brief shots, everyone had two or three turns as camera crew. They were all curious and eager, crowding round after a shot to gaze at the camera. Finally came editing: shots were separated and numbered, joined (in the first instance with sellotape) and run through. The inevitable upside-down joins were rectified and spliced. It was perhaps this last process that, in answer to the question, "What did you learn making a film?" evoked the heartfelt answer, "Patience".

Though film-appreciation at this age is very rudimentary, attempts are made at some primary schools to show children films they will understand and enjoy. Monthly in the winter

a film is booked for a period and circulated among schools taking part in the scheme. The younger children like a programme of shorts, nine and ten year olds prefer features, and all chiefly enjoy films having children as the central characters. *Elephant Boy*, *Captains Courageous*, *Treasure Island*, some of the C.F.F. productions, such as *Dragon of Pendragon Castle* and *The Magic Chalks*, are popular. Also enjoyed are puppet films, early Chaplin, and interest films about ski-ing or rodeos; they are refreshingly ready to see a favourite film a second time.

3

The majority of secondary school children (many of them regular cinemagoers) accept uncritically and unquestioningly the films, suitable or unsuitable, that they see. They can even accept as 'true' a film made by their own school-fellows, who may well be sitting beside them in the audience. A film made by thirteen-year-old girls was shown at one school, written comments on its good and bad points being invited. Often the uncritical response was: "It was a very good film, I liked it all"; or the reaction was a purely subjective one based on the child's experiences in a similar situation: "One thing I did not like was where Carol and Betty were showing their pretty dresses and Pat had an old plain one". A child lacking in confidence "did not like the first part where they left the new girl out". Most approved of the comfortable happy ending, where "all the girls became friends and had a nice feast together". A few, though, were able to stand aside and view a film as a piece of creative work, commenting on story and treatment. "The film was scrappy". "The story was not very clear". Only Anne began to criticise the validity of the characters' actions when she commented: "I did not like the way they left the new girl out, as we always ask new girls what is their name and things about themselves".

In the attitude to films seen at the local cinemas, there is the divergence between Mina, who spent four evenings a week at the cinema, understanding little of the films she saw and having to have them explained afterwards by her elder sister, and Susan, who had seen only one film and rejected all the rest as "silly and a complete waste of time".

Anything that helps these children to realise that a film does not necessarily present a true picture of life, that it is not authoritative but subject to criticism, and that this criticism can increase their enjoyment, is of value; and here film-making greatly helps. It must be remembered that to form an opinion requires effort, and a noticeable characteristic of many of these children is their tendency to be put off by difficulties rather than to accept them as a challenge. In film-making, though, they must inevitably discuss and argue about problems as they arise; and some will find themselves taking on responsibilities they would not otherwise have thought of assuming. While this school story was being



Scripting session at a course held to train school teachers in the use of the camera.

filmed, there was great excitement in being in charge of the camera—"I was scared stiff but thrilled the first time I pressed the button". The rest of the school, impressed by the fact that a real film had been made, shared the interest.

As in other groups, it was not the resulting picture that was important, nor, valuable though it was, the improvement in other subjects, nor the satisfaction in creative group-work. Rather, the purpose had been achieved when an active interest in films was aroused, and the tools of the cinema more clearly understood. This is the first stage towards developing a habit of criticism, supplying standards which children can apply to all the films they see. Film appreciation can be extended in this group with programmes of features (*The Overlanders*, *Great Expectations*, etc.), study-extracts and shorts, and various devices can be employed to disassociate these meetings from lessons. Here, as always, discussion among the children is of paramount importance.

4

It is more difficult at a grammar school to find time for film-making, though some have introduced it as an out-of-class activity. One boys' school has made two films in this way from scripts written at home and discussed during lunch-hours, after which they were allowed two days to film. "... A number of ingenious shots were composed by the boys, who thought out the mechanics as we went along. We had a fine tracking effect by mounting the camera on a dinner trolley and moving it thirty yards along some planks ... A hundred boys—the actors ranged from the first to the sixth form—co-operated on the film".

One girls' grammar school has now put film-making on the time-table, the teacher concerned having first taken part in a scheme run by the Liverpool Education Authority to train teachers in the use of a 16mm. camera. "... I was allotted one period a week with a dozen sixth form girls (average age, seventeen), and we were free to choose our film theme. During the winter term, they filmed *A Reminder About Litter*, intended chiefly for school consumption. This accustomed them to using the camera, so that they embarked confidently on a more ambitious venture, *How Do You View Liverpool?*, a study of places and happenings in the city.

Repeated visits to locations established the possibilities and the best time of day for each place; no shot-by-shot script was used, since much of the action involved people going about their everyday affairs.

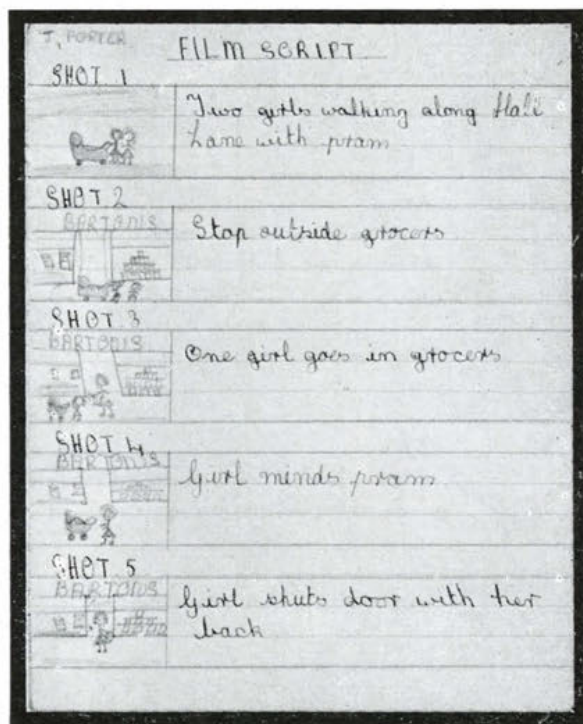
"Last October saw the start on Merseyside of a two year 'Survey of Cinema' course for 16-18 year-olds, organised by the Merseyside Council for Film Appreciation and consisting of programmes of screen classics accompanied by short introductory talks. Three hundred children subscribed to the first session, and attendances were consistently good. I asked my film-group to write comments on their own film-making and on this Survey, to consider whether they had gained anything from taking part in both schemes concurrently. Most think that they are using their eyes more effectively as they go about: 'I had never noticed how beautifully the light plays on the little back cracks in the city', one wrote, 'I hadn't even noticed the little back cracks'. This active seeing further extends to their viewing of films: 'I now realise that a film is a creation and not just scenes put in front of a camera'; 'I have learned not just to follow the story'; 'Modern films sometimes, I think, could learn a lot from old films. For in the age of VistaVision, etc., I seldom see any really unusual shots'; 'It now seems to me that the film stars themselves are of only secondary importance and that the real stars are the men who make films ...'

This work of appreciation is followed-up after school-leaving age. Many of those who leave school having seen only the first half of the "Survey of Cinema" have asked if they can complete the course. For those who want to continue the discussion of films in a more intimate group, there are weekly meetings organised by the Merseyside Council for Film Appreciation; and for those who want to extend their experience of film-making, Burton Manor Residential College for Adult Education, Wirral, has held several week-end courses each year.

None of use whose experiences are reported here is so foolish as to imagine that we are in sight of our objective—an enlightened audience, critical and discriminating in its choice of films. But the work we are doing is enjoyable: we believe it is also progressing along the right lines.

Our Film

We got our idea of making our film by seeing another film made by boys and girls out of another school who are younger than us. Our film is nothing like theirs. It starts with two girls with a pram. Then one girl goes into a shop and the other stays outside with the pram. And some-one comes up and speaks to her and then goes away. Then the other girl comes out and she dropped the parcels and the other girl turns and lets go of the pram and it goes rolling down the hill. Then a lot of children chase after it. A girl reading a comic comes up the hill and happens to look up in time to see the pram coming for her, she dodges and drops the comic. Then a girl on skates comes skating and she skates after it and she catches up with it. She stops it and looks to see if the baby wasn't hurt. The other girls all crowd round her patting her on the back. That is our Film and it is a very good Film too.



Left: extract from a film script by a class of twelve-year-old girls. Above: a description of the film.

An Open Letter

JOHN MADDISON

Mr Maddison's Letter on the policy of SIGHT AND SOUND arises out of a conversation which he had with Gavin Lambert shortly before the latter resigned from the editorship. Mr. Maddison was later invited to develop his comments on the critical disregard of documentary in the form of an article.

SIGHT AND SOUND is the longest established and almost certainly the most widely read magazine of film criticism appearing in English today. It is also the journal of the British Film Institute. And no-one can deny that, for better or for worse, it is an influential paper. In many ways, its influence has, during the period of Gavin Lambert's editorship (1949-56), been a healthy one—towards freshness and vitality, complete independence of judgment, and a sort of scholarship and thoroughness which is immensely rare in so much that still passes for film criticism and in the most respectable quarters. I am however, I believe, not alone in feeling that the editorial policy of SIGHT AND SOUND has been based on too limited a view of the film medium. Given the journal's importance, it seemed worthwhile to analyse more closely and constructively this dissatisfaction.

As a beginning, I can best illustrate the main limitation I have in mind with a parallel from current literature. Recently, I have been reading two new works, the first a piece, or series of pieces, of factual reporting (Edmund Wilson's travel book *Red, Black, Blond and Olive*) and the second a novel by a highly competent technician (Compton Mackenzie's *Thin Ice*). The more serious literary and political papers appearing in English will no doubt be giving the same degree of coverage to both these books. One cannot help feeling, perhaps a little unfairly, that the screen equivalent of the less important *Thin Ice* (the fiction produced by a celebrated technician) is the kind of thing SIGHT AND SOUND likes to spread itself on. Certainly its pages represent a far less catholic approach, in respect of film content and genres, than does the book section of, say, *The Listener*, which takes biography, science, and even directly educational works as they come. The nature of films does, it is true, account for some part of this unbalance, but not entirely.

The reporting book is superior not merely in content and imaginative power but also as writing and technique. The problems of technique and of language that Wilson had to face were, of course, different in kind from those confronting the fiction-writer. They were, it seems to me, no less interesting, and the same holds true of different genres of film-making. In other words, and at the risk of underlining a platitude, the cinema is a means of expression, a form of language. Only too often, one feels, SIGHT AND SOUND takes it to be something much less interesting and important—a mere vehicle for the elaboration of screen "fiction" fashioned



"Le Sang des Bêtes": Georges Franju's uncompromising study of a Paris slaughter-house was recently shown in London in the second of the Free Cinema Programmes. "The camera reconnoitres: then does what we have not dared, goes in..." (William Whitebait).

to certain well-established movie conventions.

If one truly accepts that the film is a species of language, it is clear that the scope and the function of film criticism are greatly enriched. One can then approach the cinema in the same broad humanist spirit as may be observed in the best kind of book criticism, where intellectual and aesthetic canons are applied to the consideration of writing in many different styles and on all manner of subjects. Any opposite concept would lead ultimately to a kind of writing not essentially very different from that found in the fan-magazines; socially innocuous and even useful, but hardly what a journal like SIGHT AND SOUND should be aiming at.

On the latter day consequences of what was once a quite genuine change in the use of cinema language (rather like, in a way, the attack on poetic diction by Wordsworth and Coleridge), SIGHT AND SOUND has been, on the whole, unduly reticent. I mean of course the documentary genre. This original concept, since obscured by so much indifferent practice and overblown pseudo-sociological theorising, has just been restated by Mr. William Salter in terms more simple and effective than those sometimes used by the documentary protagonists. "Documentary implied real people", he writes, "caught in the business of living real lives. It involved director and camera-man alike in a long and loving patience. It was opposed not to art, for it produced some of the best film art we have, but to fiction". In this sense, documentary remains and, given the nature of the cinema is likely to remain, a living principle. Salter insists that it is an aesthetic as much as a social principle, and the past ten or fifteen years have yielded a number of illustrations of this. No-one, it seems to me, who retains any sort of civilised values could deny that, whatever their faults, documentary films like *Western Approaches*, *The Undefeated* and *Thursday's Children* are superior as art to their fiction formulae equivalents, *San Demetrio*, *London*, *The Men* and *Mandy*.

It would be idle to deny that the kind of impulse which leads people to make such films has become sadly enfeebled. Far too great a proportion of what nowadays pass as "documentary" films are, it is true, dull affairs, platitudinous and quite remote from the art of the cinema. Here the attitude of a journal like *SIGHT AND SOUND* ought not surely to be one of disdainful silence. Without cluttering the pages with reviews of such films, the editors might, I suggest, contribute in a number of ways to the raising of standards. There might, for example, be some discussion of the purely technical problems which the making of "non-fiction" films raises. Little, if any, consideration is ever given to the question of film commentaries, their often crushing volubility, facetiousness, irrelevance and other forms of sheer bad writing. Then there are questions of structure—the "beginning-middle-end" shapeliness which so few factual films ever achieve; the power to make lucid, and therefore satisfying, statements through the screen language which are the mark of good films. For some tastes, by no means dull or debased ones, such qualities of grace and clarity are more important than the sort of virtuosity which, with many *soi-disant* "personal" and "experimental" screen effusions, only serves to obscure the fact that their authors have nothing whatever to say.

It is precisely in discussing what the makers of non-feature films are trying to express, the importance of their statements, the conditions under which they work, and the degree to which their achievement is personal and fresh, that *SIGHT AND SOUND* might play a more positive role. For instance, I would personally welcome the examination, with the same breadth and thoroughness of detail as *SIGHT AND SOUND* has often given to their more publicised colleagues among the feature directors of some of the younger European documentarists. The Dutch director Haanstra is a case in point. His work from *Panta Rhei* through *Mirror of Holland*, to his more recent films for the Shell Unit and the Dutch Government, clearly merits such extended analysis. We have also seen the emergence in France of one or two outstanding documentary film-makers with a strongly personal and passionate attitude to contemporary life. Franju is a remarkable figure by any reckoning, yet most of the dozen or so films he has made, failures and successes, have never even been mentioned in *SIGHT AND SOUND*. His use of commentary is, of itself, a subject well worth considering in detail. Another French director, largely ignored so far, is Alain Resnais, whose work is more interesting and significant than that of the majority of French feature film-makers. Both these directors are in the tradition of Vigo's *A Propos de Nice*, surely a *locus classicus* in the history of film art.

Questions of technique and form, and even of personal inspiration, tend to become unreal unless they are discussed in relation to their economic and social context. Here again, it seems to me, *SIGHT AND SOUND* often fails to provide any

full and serious analysis of present trends. The basic problem of film-making is, as always, one of patronage or—if one prefers it—sponsorship. The "Free Cinema" group recognised this, but I myself did not feel that the discussion of their series of films in *SIGHT AND SOUND* really faced up to all the implications. Theirs is one solution. But it is not the only one (the French directors I have referred to have perforce worked within a more orthodox financial framework); nor, candidly, should one pretend that their method, admirable though the Free Cinema initiative is, could be applied on any great scale. Important changes are taking place on the economic and social bases on which the cinema as an institution operates. To investigate these changes more fully need not be arid, and would certainly be profitable.

Symptomatic of the cinema's changing situation are the various experiments in devising new screen shapes. No-one would wish to complain of the attention which *SIGHT AND SOUND* has, from time to time, paid to these innovations. But there has, in my opinion, been a marked failure to consider the development in mass communications to which they are a response. It would be difficult to over-estimate the implications of television broadcasting for the future art of the cinema. David Robinson's quarterly column of comment on the BBC/ITA programmes is excellent as far as it goes. But already television is invading, shaking up, and in certain as yet only faintly discernible ways, extending, the cinema to such a degree that it is frankly astonishing to find so minor a reflection of its growing influence in *SIGHT AND SOUND*. The "Front Page" article in the last issue was a welcome sign that awareness of all this is increasing.

When, some twenty-four years ago, *SIGHT AND SOUND* began to appear, like *The Pickwick Papers*, in green-backed periodical parts, it was an avowedly educational journal devoted to what are nowadays called the audio-visual media. It was also, to be honest, rather dull. Since then, there have been ups and downs. Lambert shook the dear old lady up, and made her a new, vibrant and distinctly fetching high-stepper. More seriously, he and his collaborators turned *SIGHT AND SOUND* into an educational force in a higher sense, but on a narrow front—predominantly that of the feature movie. There remains something better the Film Institute might seek to give us: a film journal with as wide a cultural outlook as those serious papers which discuss the total creative product of the printed word. The cinema, as I began by insisting, is a language different from, but in some ways as protean and universal as, verbal communication itself. The aim of a journal fully representative of the ideals which brought the Institute into being would, I suggest, be to seek out anything significant in film-making, whether the subject was a sex-drama of the side-walks, the economics of automation, or an outbreak of foot-and-mouth on an English farm. This need not mean a return to dullness.

Selbstverständlich, nicht wahr?

Nowadays it is no longer questionable, whether marriage between a rising woman and a young man will be durable. Thus the marriage between Milly and Burt, as featured by the Columbia picture *Autumn Leaves*, would not mean anything unusual if it was not for a problem which is being discussed in this film and which is normally being passed over in silence by people concerned and seems to become unprevailing: the depressing past.

Burt's and Milly's marriage is jeopardised owing to the sustained set-backs which affect a man's life causing psychical illness year by year. The rising and unselfish love of a perfect woman banishes danger and the man recovers. But what would have happened if Milly had only seen not more than meets the eye, the lies, confusions, thefts and any others of Burt's vague actions?—Should not each and every woman raise the question, whether or not in her own married life there might be deeper reasons causing the well-known and often discussed crisis?

Autumn Leaves has become a picture which inspires more emphatically than hundreds of advices to think and even probably to act and—if you bear in mind its unexpressed theory—might help numerous marriages to regain an already lost happiness.—Berlin Festival publicity material.

STRIKE



"Strike": mounted troops are called in to subdue the workers.

This analysis of Eisenstein's "Strike", shown for the first time in Britain during the National Film Theatre's recent Soviet season, is the first of a series of articles in which critics will from time to time consider the little-known classics revived in the Theatre's programmes.

A few had seen. Its arrival in the west, thanks to the enterprise of the British Film Institute and the generosity of the Soviet film authorities, is a great moment for all of us—access to a fascinating treasure-house of tricks and also instants of inspired vision. Indeed, for us, the work could be renamed "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Fountain".

To discuss its quality, it will be necessary to summarise its content and action. The film is in six reels, 6,456 ft.* It should be understood that, in the Soviet film of this period (1925), the reel had a more than accidental significance.

Single projector showing was common, and the story was designed to fall into so many separate 'acts'—the interval of change-over enforcing a dramatic significance on the interruption.

Reel One or Act One shows a factory in a state of unrest. It opens with the boss, a repulsive top-hatted figure of the period whom it might almost be thought the director had selected as a jocular satire on himself, and his minions, aware that all is not well and turning to the Security Police. The police instruct a set of grotesque spying detectives—with such names as Ape, Fox, Owl and Bulldog—to ferret out what is going on. The workers foil them by a series of fantastic devices, while Bolshevik agitation grows in their ranks.

* According to the credits in S. M. Eisenstein, *Izbranniye Staty* ("Selected Articles"); Moscow, 1956.



The Second Act launches the strike. A staid worker, wrongfully accused of theft, hangs himself. The workers, in protest, bring the factory to a standstill, terrify the management, pour out of the gates, and tip a foreman and a spy out of a wheelbarrow into a filthy pool, where all that one soaked character can do is to reproach the other: "Why didn't you tip us off earlier?"

The Third Act depicts the hopeful first days of the strike. Families are united, laze and picnic in the woods. The kids march a goat in a wheelbarrow to personify the spy. The strikers formulate their demands: 8 hour day—6 for juveniles—and a 30% wage increase. The directors meet to ridicule their claims; mounted police harass the holidaying strikers.

In Reel Four the honeymoon is over, and the power of the bosses begins to be felt in counter-attack. The unpaid workers quarrel, families must starve, go without smokes, pawn their belongings. Love flies out of the window. A worker who steals to feed his children is spied by a detective, caught, beaten up, bribed and bemused into betrayal. The strike committee votes for continuance, just as a warrant is issued for the arrest of its leader.

In Reel Five, a preposterous interlude, the counter-attack develops. The Security Police, not "squeamish" in their methods, (as a sub-title declares), enlist the aid of a King of the Underworld. His spiv army plans the smashing up of a brandy-shop in the workers' quarters as a provocation to serve as pretext for an attack by the waiting police. Despite police inactivity in face of the looting, the fire brigade arrives, summoned by an anxious woman. But, ironically, precisely the water that was to extinguish the provocatory fire is made the means of attack upon the crowd, who sense the trap too late for escape. Among those falling unconscious is the strike-leader, who is found and arrested.

Reel Six, the last Act, shows the decisive, impatient move by the bosses. The military are summoned by the Governor. At first the crowd is disciplined, giving the waiting cavalry no pretext. But a child wandering among the horses' hooves, and the cry for help of a woman running to its rescue and struck down by a soldier, sparks the conflict. The charging horses pursue the workers right to the topmost floors of their block of flats. Meanwhile the arrested strike-leader remains staunch and defiant. "You cannot arrest us all," he cries, "Our lads will stick it." "What lads?" cynically enquires the police chief, as a cut-away shows the ruin and death among the workers' dwellings; and there follows the famous climax of the slaughter of a bull cross-cut with the final massacre of the workers.

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This theme, and its working out, are recognisably simple and of the period. The force of the film resides much in this "monograph" quality: a narrative whittled down to the bare bones, as in *Potemkin*, but embroidered and expanded with related "mono-thematic" detail. A critic, accounting for the fact that in his later work Eisenstein achieved immortal, indelible sequences, but developed each to such a degree that the balance of the whole sometimes left an ungainly and distorted impression, once called him the "master of the episode". It is extremely interesting that *Strike*, like *Potemkin*, was originally conceived as an episode. It is little known that *Potemkin* was planned as a mere sequence in a great work, 1905, but that, on the location, the scene, the atmosphere, the depths (once delved into) of the subject, inspired him to such elaboration that *Potemkin* became a film in itself.

Two sequences from "Strike". Left: the hoses are turned on the workers, with "increasing amounts of water changing giggles into agony". Right: the final sequence. The slaughter of a bull is cross-cut with the massacre of the workers, and the film comes to an abrupt and enigmatic end with a last close-up of two staring, watchful eyes.

L'appetit, with Sergei Mikhailovitch, *venait en filmant*. (This had tragic consequences for him many times afterwards, and not only in Mexico.) *Strike*, according to its credits, was to have been part of a cycle "Toward Dictatorship", which helps one to place in proper perspective the uncompromising and otherwise hard-to-comprehend apparent defeatism of its climax.

It is said that Eisenstein came to cinema from the circus acts and opera bouffe of the Proletcult Theatre, through an attempt to stage a play, *Strike*, in an actual factory; after which, as logical next step in converting actual steel and cement into plastic art material, he had to go on toward film†. Be this as it may, these two aspects of his career are apparent in every foot of *Strike*. On the one hand, here and there, actual material is arranged with economy and laconism into a realism poignant in its universality; on the other, the fantastic clowning of the circus shows itself in detail everywhere, and in the exaggerated, even hypertrophied, treatment of particular episodes and the plot in general. The twisting of actual material, with an ironic air of naturalism, to express such fanciful, exaggerated, "propaganda-poster" ideas, works often with a confusing, indeed shattering, effect on the spectator that must have delighted the young Eisenstein and flung him passionately into love with the film medium and its potentialities. From this marriage of circus in thought and nature in image, there springs a lavish shower of fireworks: violations of every canon, experiments in method, such an abundance of trial runs as was never dreamed of in cinema before or seen since in a single work; diabolical and wavering changes of mood—some lyrical and human to a degree untypical of the style of this creator, others packed with that characteristic macabre *espieglerie* that his friends knew so well and either loved or excused—everything in such overpowering quantity as almost to prompt the overwhelmed spectator to cry "Mercy! Enough!" long before the end of what is, in footage, quite a short film.

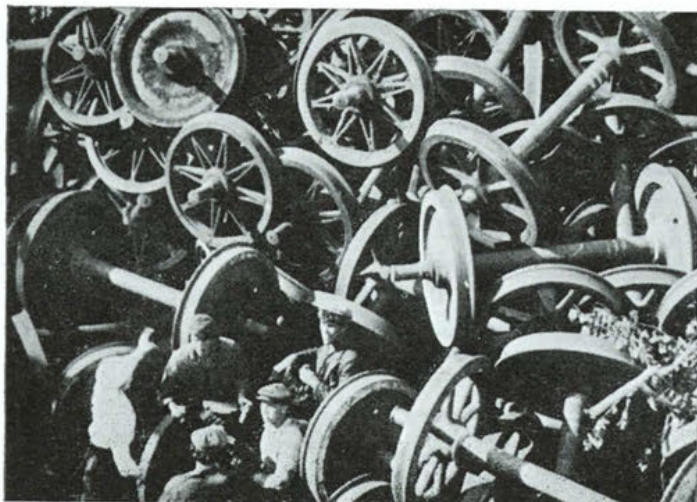
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The script is credited to the "Proletcult Group"; Grisha Alexandrov and the other circus lads were by his side as aides and small-part actors, Eduard Tisse was already the cameraman. (Which is to say that, so far as image is concerned, what master imagined acolyte interpreted.) Machinery, factory-chimneys, boots and landscapes spring to life and speech as meaningful as actors. The strikers confer amid giant wheels, in bathing-dresses on the flukes of a huge anchor and—a classic locale of factory plotting—in the lavatory. Tricks, obvious or less so, equate the spies and their animal counterparts, animate portraits in police files, crosscut (in addition to the more famous instances) the lemon squeezer for dashing cocktails with the mounted police horses surrounding and provoking the picnic. Dynamic frame—executed in that day perforce in the camera, not in the lab.—is everywhere: men huddle to conspire and the walls of the frame close in as they whisper; a fugitive fleeing in half a shot turns a corner, and the mask disappears from the other half to disclose the captors into whose hands he is running. Countless attempts foreshadow more felicitous renderings in the later masterpieces: the child in danger, the slain child, the screaming face, the slow ponderous advance. With boundless creative energy, again and again are picked up, inspected and flung down at us the same scraps of ideas that later—when informed with greater intuition and experience, disciplined into rhythm and pattern with the necessary restraint—became the key scenes of some of the strongest visual effects in all cinema history.

"Montage," of cutting and of script, is there in its simplest

† *Izbranniye Staty* gives *Strike* as Eisenstein's second essay with the camera, a film "scene" for a Proletcult Theatre production having been shot the year before.





"... Men huddle to conspire and the walls of the frame close in as they whisper".

form and in its subtlest. (The dialectical "increasing quantity becomes change of quality", visually interpreted in the separator sequence of *The General Line* by the changes from milk to spray and from spray to figures, is here foreshadowed in a thematic interpretation by the "hose-scene", with increasing amounts of water changing giggles into agony.) At one moment the film contrasts the happiness and sorrow of a family owning, or wanting, a few pence with simplicity and naturalness. Other episodes—the King of the Provocateurs summoning his minions from vasty subterranean bowls, the traitor seduced by the police with a blend of midgets and champagne, or Glizer (later classic pillar of the Soviet stage) as an impossible Teddy-girl hooligan queen—soar into pantomime surrealism.

Above all and everywhere, one who has worked with S. M. Eisenstein recognises his yielding to the perpetual inspiration of shapes, the eye suddenly perceiving their dramatic or only mischievous potentialities, the mind and hand distorting the scene to fit the improvisation. The results sometimes arouse wonder or even inspire awe. At others they are, inevitably, formalistic. When the Eisenstein of *Strike* saw the bridges at all levels between the blocks of flats, it was at once inevitable that the horses would have to range up and down on all of them. But the scene fails of final effect, for all its breath-taking quality, for who believes that the flat-dwellers could not have invented quite effective obstacles? But the same devouring, percipient eye and instant courage improvised the steps at Odessa.

Of course many, indeed most, of the ambitious effects sought so energetically in *Strike* do not come off, or at least are overloaded. They are not exact enough. Like every exuberant cinematic novice, the Eisenstein of *Strike* cannot bear to part with anything: a sequence reaches its impact and is held too long. The victims of the hose can suffer no more, at the climax our indignant anger rises to a peak, but alas they go on suffering longer, their pain verges on the chronic. The woman pent in a basement by a mounted policeman is, at first seeing, a symbol of unbearable panic and agony, but we cut back to her so often that we begin to ask "Not dead yet?" For discrimination, rejection, polishing to perfection, we must await the masterpieces that followed this beginning.

The film evoked surprise and admiration when shown at the

National Film Theatre during the Soviet season. Nevertheless, the copy can be much improved. It is a beautiful print, defective only in that it has been topped and tailed. The front lacks the credit titles; the end finishes abruptly and enigmatically with two eyes, possibly of watching humanity, but certainly too short in length. So far, the copy is provided only with flash-titles (one-or-two-frame titles trimmed originally for export, and kept in the film only to indicate position). These are in Russian and German, not always in the same place; it will be a work of exegesis and Shakespearean higher criticism to elucidate in all cases the original intention.

The present generation tends to forget to what a degree, especially among the montage-ridden Soviet silent masters, the precise length, wordage and often typography of a title or group of titles are integral to the cutting, and so effect, of a whole sequence. The film will undoubtedly become more of a whole in its variation of mood, more shapely in its chaos of rhythms, when the titles are replaced at proper length, with their nuances and effective pauses. Between the "hose holocaust", for example, and the start of the massacre, should stand a very long title indeed, to give us the proper punctuation to get our breath back. Again, there is one incident that can be 'made' by its title. We know all through the "flats assault" that the two babies playing on the top bridge are in danger and will probably die. But when the mounted soldier seizes one of them and drops it over the railings to be crushed far below, the act now seems far-fetched, a gratuitous hate-inciting slur on the soldier's humanity. A flash, however, shows us a place for a title just before the deed: "Ozvereli"—"They have become beasts." Whether previously planned by Eisenstein or an afterthought to meet a felt need, this comment gives an acid Goya-esque flavour of objectivity, embracing butcher and victim together in a common vision and compassion that lifts the incident to an entirely different plane.

Strike is not a suitable medium for the extraction of sequences from which learnedly to deduce exemplars of craftsmanship. Everything in it is young, overflowing with the abundant excitement and imagination of a genius feeling its way and not knowing its powers. As a whole it is an exemplar, but of something much wider, graphically illustrating the growth of an artist, and a marvellous passage in the youth and the life of an art.

Television

"The public at large is very ignorant and very good-natured, and anything is possible". (Henry James: *Notes on the New York Theatres*, 1875)

"It seems to me that the unhappiness of the intellectuals is due to their loneliness, their aloofness from life

Bring the people over to your side, attract them by spiritual interests, give the people a chance to understand you and to become as spiritually rich as yourselves. Then you will no longer be lonely; then you will be strong and only then can true culture triumph and true humanity be victorious. Life will then be joyous and easy and even the stones will smile" (Maxim Gorki: *London—A Sketch*, 1917)

"Jasper thought it underbred to be snobbish about television, so he forebore to mention that he had no set". (Angus Wilson: *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, 1956)

TELEVISION is reaching to every part of the world; within a few years it is conceivable that its influence will be universal. The modern Archimedes will not rely on such a vague device as a long pole and somewhere to pivot it: an hour or so in control of universal television systems would move the world more effectively. Thirty or forty years ago Lenin recognised that "for us, the cinema is the most important of all the arts"; and so he organised the industry and its artists to help effect one of the biggest social and cultural revolutions in history. Today, however, a television transmission may be seen in one evening by more people than could see a film in a year; it can be prepared and transmitted more quickly; it has the greater impact of immediacy; it is received under conditions which may make the audience much more receptive and vulnerable than they are in the cinema.

So far, however, the potential influence of television has never been fully, consciously exploited. Almost accidentally, it is true, audiences have discovered new tastes and interests. Wesleyans in Scunthorpe have learnt to appraise and compare the merits of different ballet companies; bootmakers in Penzance can now relish the form of show-jumpers; schoolchildren and waitresses have come to enjoy taking part in the identification of prehistoric pottery or the discovery of a Roman villa. Already people have learnt to share pleasures which before were the preserve of a minority.

Television found an audience largely innocent of prejudices—innocent even of formulated tastes. Its scope for enlarging their vision was immense. It is all the more disappointing when we find its potential being used to degrade the tastes it is forming; to attract audiences to the flashy glamour of third-rate variety and fifth-rate parlour games or bottled American drama.



The view that this may happen more and more in television is not an especially embittered one, and it is largely endorsed by a statement by the Independent Television Authority on August 1st, when it cast aside its cultural pretensions, along with its hopes of a new grant under Section 11 of the Television Act:

The Authority is conscious, and its view is shared by the programme companies, that the present programmes, although extremely popular, do not contain a sufficient number of programmes of information and discussion or of plays and performances of lasting value. For this the explanation is the very simple one that such programmes, whether transmitted by the Authority or the BBC, do not attract relatively large audiences, in spite of their national value . . .

The Authority's view directly contradicts the assertions of the optimistic members of Parliament who upheld the establishment of an independent television service. *The Times*, in a first leader on August 6th, recalled a number of these assertions, of which one of the most typical and colourful, if not the most coherent, was that of Lord Simonds, who asked:

Does Shakespeare live? Has that immortal voice been stilled? Is that hand of glory withered? Shakespeare reigns. And why? Not because he has been proclaimed King by the Director-General, the Governors, the Advisory Council, the angels and archangels at the BBC, but because he is the chosen of the people, whom you, my Lords, so sadly and so strangely mistrust.



Eventually, of course, it is impossible to say exactly what the public wants or when and how it wants it. The only possible reconciliation of the Authority's disillusion, Lord Simonds' optimism, a desire for the best use of television and a proper respect for the public is the faith that the public will finally respect quality. For example, of the panel games, *What's My Line* and *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral* are at once first-rate and popular. Certainly the public will turn off a dull play; but a good play well produced cannot be dull; and the audience will with equal rapidity switch off an inferior crooner or a bad variety programme (though variety programmes have the unfair advantage of holding the promise that the next number will be a better one). An interesting personality in a religious programme or an excitingly presented news commentary will hold its audience—as long as good advertising has advised them that there is going to be something worth looking at in the first place. Perhaps the failure of documentaries has been that so many of them have been bad or boring; and a boring documentary has no more right to an audience than a bad red-nosed comic. Inversely a first-class red-nose comic may provide a performance 'of lasting value' alongside a play or 'programme of information or discussion'.

Of course, if quality will attract and hold an audience, so will an appeal to our baser instincts and desires. *Beat the Clock* with its elements of gambling and sadism and *Yakitty Yak* with its rather elementary sexual interest have an appeal equal to that of the BBC's better quiz programmes. The morbid *Inner Sanctum* probably has no fewer viewers than the more wholesome series presentations. Fortunately, however, there is in theory a control to prevent too blatant an appeal to our worse instincts.

But whether we acknowledge that what will finally win audiences is not so much the type as the quality of the programmes; and whether or not we agree that it is on quality rather than type that the final effect of television—to degrade the mass public to vulgarity and immaturity or to elevate it to wider interests, discriminating tastes and an adult and responsible humanity—will depend, there remains the problem of maintaining the required level of quality. The problem is considerable; again and again we find the contributors to Mr. Rotha's symposium *Television in the Making* deploring the shortage of writers and artists, and of time needed to improve the quality of productions. A hundred hours a week is a great deal of transmission time; and the number of artists to supply them is very small.



And this is the real point of this article. Is not the real weakness of television throughout the world the failure of the intellectuals to come forward and serve it? There is a continuing snobbishness which makes intellectuals exert themselves, if at all, only to clown, to prove their democracy in permitting themselves to become TV personalities. Our best artists, especially the young ones, must overcome this feeling if television is to do its job. They must not complain that their work would not be understood by the masses; part of their job should be the discovery of a means of expression which would enable them to speak to the people. Things are still as Gorki found them in 1917: "The unhappiness of the intellectuals is due to their loneliness, their aloofness from life". The solution may still be the same, and it may be easier now; to use this medium, which can give them unprecedented and almost incalculable power, to

Bring the people over to your side, attract them by spiritual interests, give the people a chance to understand you and to become as spiritually rich as yourselves. . .

DAVID ROBINSON.

Correspondence

Critical Attitudes

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

SIR,—The contributors to SIGHT AND SOUND, like those to most responsible film periodicals these days, adopt a highly critical, even despairing, attitude to the current product in films. And, no doubt, rightly so, but whether for altogether valid reasons is quite a different question. It is instructive to compare the articles in the Summer number by Lindsay Anderson and Walter Lassally; there seems to be behind both their criticisms an implicit standard of judgment which is accepted as self-evidently 'true', though in fact highly arguable.

The demand behind both articles seems to be for the simple, the warm and human, varied occasionally by hard-hitting but unsensational social criticism. This is of course quite acceptable as a personal taste—perhaps even a personal prejudice—on the part of the critics concerned; but surely to erect it into an apparently abstract standard of judgment and judge all films accordingly is to carry things too far. It lays, the less committed critic might think, far too much stress on the subject-matter of the film, and far too little on the treatment. To say that, say, *Not as a Stranger* or *The Man with the Golden Arm* are bad because they "contain this fundamentally unhealthy element, which seems to derive from a conviction that today's audiences simply will not take a straightforward, honest drama dealing with the lives of reasonably average men and women", is no doubt part of the story, but only a part. To me they seem bad simply because they are boring—over-long and over-leisurely in treatment for their subjects, variably acted and, most important, directed heavily, without imagination or individuality. The most sensational, blatantly one-sided view of things can be acceptable if handled with conviction and imagination—if it seems a true reflection of a point of view, however far that point of view may be from one's own. In this way, if we are fair, we must admit that an honest glorification of the good sides of war can be just as valid as a statement of complete disgust with the whole thing . . . In the same way *Potemkin*, *The Triumph of the Will* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* all have a right to exist and a right to non-partisan, aesthetic judgment as works of cinema.

The trouble with a demand for 'commitment' in subject-matter is that it demands also the rejection of much that to the 'irresponsible' aesthete makes the cinema most worthwhile. In practice, to judge by the reviews that appear in your columns, it seems to involve a distrust of the film that demands a sophisticated, civilised response (*Member of the Wedding*, *Les Enfants Terribles*, *To Catch a Thief*, *Muerte de un Ciclista*, to cite a variety of cases), and a weakness for the unpolished and just-competent in direction. Ultimately it seems to approach the news-reel outlook; that is to say, that if in a news-reel one sees victims of famine one is moved, but one is moved simply by their plight, not by the artistic representation of famine. Many of your critics seem to regard this as the height of cinema art—the camera simply records, and nothing stands between the audience and the events portrayed. To me this seems a betrayal of film art—it is rather as if one were to say that efficient journalism is the height of literary achievement.

Take, for example, de Sica's much praised *Umberto D.*: some scenes in it, such as that of the maid's first chores around the kitchen, are exquisitely handled—camera-movement and lighting are at one with the subject and fuse together into an expressive whole. Other scenes, however, such as that in which Umberto D. tries to beg, rely on making something touching happen in front of the camera and then recording it. And we are moved, but surely, by the situation itself, not by its realisation in filmic terms.

Also the demand for commitment involves a number of snobberies. Critics forget that it is just as easy, and probably easier, to make a bad film ordinary shape, black and white, on a small budget and without stars as it is to make one in the full glory of CinemaScope and stereophonic sound, with five stars—and for that matter professional film-makers are usually professionals

because they know more about it than amateurs. By all means let us praise enterprise and good intentions, but if necessary we should be ready to allow a film "nought for achievement, one for trying"—as I felt, dare I admit it, to be the case with *Together*. Another favourite snobbery is the rejection of the period, costume film—on the principle, presumably, that something vital about human beings can only be said about people in modern dress, as if people are social counters and their reactions are entirely dependent on their immediate social milieu . . . And of course there is the fashionable despair over the pure entertainment film. But why bother to despair over science fiction, or *Hilda Crane*, or *The Rains of Ranchipur* or *Serenade*? They will mostly be forgotten in a few months, like the majority of films at any period, and the few survivors will be resurrected to critical praise in some five or ten years time . . .

By all means let critics prefer committed, humanist films on contemporary subjects, but such moral judgments should be presented as what they are—personal, subjective tastes, not the be-all and end-all of criticism. To present such moral judgments (which could often be reached just as well through reading a plot summary of the film without seeing it) does not absolve critics from the necessity of reaching some aesthetic judgment for the benefit of people who just happen to love the film for its own sake, and would rather, in the words of the late Richard Winnington, "join the queue for a Mark Ostrer film or an American musical (much rather!) than see no films at all".

Yours faithfully,

J. R. TAYLOR.

5 Shakespeare Road,
Dover.

Mr. Taylor's letter, which raises fundamental issues concerning the function and responsibility of the critic, is referred to in the "Front Page" editorial and in Mr. Lindsay Anderson's article on page 63.—Editor.

Foreign Affairs

SIR,—I should like to say how much I agree with Kenneth Scrutton on the subject of foreign films and SIGHT AND SOUND. The magazine has a considerable influence on the cinema-going of provincial film lovers. Perhaps it is not realised quite how great this influence is until something like Mr. Scrutton's letter makes us think about it.

Londoners are fortunate in that they are able to sample films of all types, from all nations, and, finances and time permitting, are able to see films both good and bad and form opinions unadulterated by reviews or criticisms. But, inevitably, the provincial cinemagoer finds his selection of the films that reach him greatly influenced by what he has read in the newspapers and in journals such as SIGHT AND SOUND. Perhaps you will say that one should not allow oneself to be affected in this way, that one should follow one's own inclinations. Of course that's true, but in practice it doesn't work out. One goes to the local cinema to see a film one has read about, and is apt to ignore the others.

Now I personally found that, reading enthusiastically about the foreign masterpieces in SIGHT AND SOUND, I was filling my mind with the names of these films, and looking forward with anticipation to seeing them, and in so doing was excluding some probably very entertaining and most likely very competent British films. I feel that, in concentrating too much on Continental films (however good) more than two-thirds of which never reach the main cinema public in Britain, SIGHT AND SOUND is missing the opportunity of being really meaningful and pertinent reading for a great many of its, nevertheless, devoted followers.

Yours faithfully,

H. J. M. FRANCOIS.

3 Mendip Close,
Malvern,
Worcs.

SIR,—SIGHT AND SOUND comes to me as a fairly new publication. May I therefore make a few criticisms? First, there are German Notes and Italian Notes, but why no Russian Notes? These would be particularly appropriate just now. "Russian Panorama" seems to have been much appreciated. Of course the magazine is published by the British Film Institute, and if members object to a plethora of foreign matter there's an end to it . . .

Secondly, the article on the German cinema by Enno Patalas was very good, but . . . it is difficult to decide exactly what it wants . . . It is as though the author knows perfectly well what ails German film production, but he does not want to be the first to say. The deeper he grows the more mysterious becomes the German enigma.

He has created an insoluble problem, whereas if he were to draw the conclusion from his analysis he would see what is wrong.

Thank you for Catherine Duncan's *The World of Silence*. I found it very exciting.

Yours faithfully,
R. MURRAY EDGILL.

110 Narbonne Avenue,
London, S.W.4.

The Cynical Audience

Sir,—Paradoxical though it may seem, may not the growth of the film society and specialist cinema movement be a contributory cause of the decline in audience taste of which Mr. Walter Lassally writes in *SIGHT AND SOUND*. By draining off much of the more adult and critical element from the audiences of the local Odeon and Ritz, it must surely lower the average standard of the remainder.

Indeed there seem to be signs that within the not too distant future film production will—in the West at least—fall into two categories. On the one hand we will find a small number of modestly budgeted movies made (generally) in black and white and for small screens, by the minority of “committed” film-makers, generally independently and against odds but sometimes backed (for prestige reasons) by the more intelligent of the big production companies. These will be destined primarily for film festivals, for the critics and for limited specialist and perhaps 16mm. release. On the other hand, the “popular” audience will be fed almost exclusively on a progressively more moronic diet of coloured, big-screen historical spectacles, super-westerns, uninspired musicals, crime and s-f shockers and “weepies”. These will whenever possible be remakes of past box-office successes tailored to the less sophisticated tastes of their intended audiences.

I am aware that similar gloomy forecasts were advanced shortly after the coming of sound, and these were subsequently invalidated. But in those days there was not the same relatively large (at least embryonic) specialist audience. Is this once more too pessimistic a conclusion? And if not, what measures can be taken to change the probable shape of things to come in the cinema?

Yours faithfully,
D. J. IBBERTSON.

4 Denmark Place,
Charing Cross Road,
London, W.C.2.

Sir,—Walter Lassally in his article “The Cynical Audience” touches on a point which I much wanted to raise . . . namely the reactions of some part of National Film Theatre audiences who find it witty and clever to laugh and chatter through so many films. I have had enough of these pseudo-intellectuals who consider it “the thing to do” to visit the N.F.T., attired either in their mink or duffel coats. During the showing of *Nosferatu* (a classic of its time) they laughed and roared their ill-mannered way. (I am reminded of the lady at a previous visit who remarked aloud that she preferred the London Pavilion.) Out with these fools!

Yours faithfully,
KEN LINDSAY.

17 Hall Place Gardens,
St. Albans.

“Pather Panchali”

Sir,—I have just come from the National Film Theatre after seeing *Pather Panchali*, and feel hopelessly in debt. Much praise and thanks are due.

First, to Mr. Ray for making so beautiful a film. Second, to Lindsay Anderson for drawing attention to it. Third, to all concerned with securing the London premiere for the National Film Theatre. It is not possible, do you think, to over-rate the value and merit of this film?

Yours faithfully,
ALAN KEMP

75 Calton Avenue,
Dulwich Village, S.E.21

“The Long Arm”

In the “Guide to Current Films” in the Summer number of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, we referred to the Ealing Studios’ production *The Long Arm* as “Ealing’s swan-song”. It has been pointed out to us that this phrase could be open to misinterpretation, and we apologise for any misunderstanding it may have caused. Although *The Long Arm* was the last film to come from Ealing Studios, the company itself of course remains actively engaged in production under the name of Ealing Films.

(AFTER THE BALL, continued from page 91)

style there is in the film comes from Yul Brynner’s marvellous vitality and from Jerome Robbins’ enchanting choreography—though it is disappointing that in his first work for the screen he has chosen (or been asked) to do little more than reproduce his stage choreography.

The director’s style is only too apparent in *Guys and Dolls*. Sinatra, Brando, Vivian Blaine, Jean Simmons are all expert and fairly sympathetic, the other Broadway characters are as engaging as ever, Frank Loesser’s score has a welcome musical sophistication and dryness, Oliver Smith has created a beautiful fantasy version of Times Square. Unfortunately Joseph Mankiewicz has felt it necessary to make a kind of expanded paraphrase of the original dialogue, so that it all takes an unconscionably long time: he has not learned that the real business of a musical is the numbers. Here, therefore, they come as a welcome but all too infrequent relief from the endless stream of Runyonese. Several of the best-known songs in the score have been replaced by new ones, not always to advantage, but perhaps this was necessary to accommodate the at present limited vocal range of Brando and Jean Simmons. At all events, that great duet *Sue Me*, so heartbreakingly inarticulate, has not been left out, and Blaine and Sinatra sing it marvellously. Michael Kidd’s Crap Game dance has always seemed to me an interpolation, without dramatic point and with too much unison dancing; it seems so here. The other numbers are staged with his customary brilliance.

These three films seem to indicate that, while the theatrical musical has as much vitality as ever (as is shown by such shows as *House of Flowers*, *Damn Yankees*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Most Happy Fella*), the film musical has succumbed to the prevalent disease, accurately diagnosed by Gavin Lambert on another page as elephantiasis. Must we expect for the future nothing but a series of animated souvenir programmes of Broadway shows in CinemaScope? Or is the musical of the future more truly foreshadowed in *Rock Around the Clock*? Or dare we hope that Astaire, an older and wiser Kelly, Donen, Minnelli, Quine, Fosse, and others who have given us so much pleasure in the past, will somehow between them keep the American Lyric Cinema alive and kicking?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stills:

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *Guys and Dolls*, *If You Feel Like Singing*, *Invitation to the Dance*, *Wedding Breakfast*.
WARNER BROTHERS for *The Wrong Man*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Searchers*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *The King and I*, *Bus Stop*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Killing*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Knock On Any Door*.
RKO-RADIO for *They Live By Night*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Strike*.
HARLEQUIN PRODUCTIONS for picture of Joseph Losey.
UNIFRANCE for *Un Condamné à Mort est Echappé*, *Gervaise*.
INTERCONTINENTAL for *Stella*.
ARIANE-DEFA for *Till*.
AGUILA FILMS for *Calabuch*.
FILMS OF POLAND for *The Traitor*.
TRADITION FILMS for *Three in One*.
LUX FILMS for *Impero del Sole*.
TELFILM for *Lauta Mancía*.
SHINTOHO for *Takekurabe*, *Where Chimneys are Seen*.
DAIEI for *Street of Shame*.
FORCES ET VOIX DE FRANCE for *Le Sang des Bêtes*.
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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

BAD SEED, THE (Warners) Screen version of the play about a woman who discovers that her 8-year-old daughter is a triple murderer. Very theatrical in style, but the playing is more persuasive than the script. (Nancy Kelly, Eileen Heckart, Patty McCormack; director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

BANDIDO (United Artists) Boisterous Mexican revolutionary adventure, with highly-coloured CinemaScope scenery and spirited playing from Gilbert Roland as a rebel leader. (Robert Mitchum, Ursula Thiess; director, Richard Fleischer. De Luxe Colour.)

BHOWANI JUNCTION (M-G-M) John Masters' novel about the last days of British India rather uneasily adapted. Melodrama up and down the railway line; Ava Gardner as the Anglo-Indian heroine; some authentic backgrounds. (Stewart Granger, Bill Travers; director, George Cukor. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

***BUS STOP** (Fox) William Inge's play adapted by George Axelrod, with Marilyn Monroe as the café singer who finds love with a husky cowboy. Rather wild reworking of the *Picnic* theme; message, as before, that sex conquers all. (Don Murray, Betty Field; director, Joshua Logan. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

***CINERAMA HOLIDAY** (Cinerama Productions) Nothing here is as impressive as the celebrated aeroplane tour in *This is Cinerama*, but the extended large-screen travelogue has its striking and effective episodes. (Directors, Robert Bendick, Philippe de Lacey. Technicolor.)

D-DAY THE SIXTH OF JUNE (Fox) British colonel and American captain fall in love with the same girl against backgrounds of an Americanised London. Best-selling wartime romance. (Robert Taylor, Richard Todd, Dana Wynter; director, Henry Koster. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

DEFROQUE, LE (Curzon) Religious drama concerned with the spiritual salvation of an unfrocked priest. Powerful polemics somewhat distastefully presented. (Pierre Fresnay, Pierre Trabaud; director, Leo Joannon.)

EVERY SECOND COUNTS (British Lion) Clouzot-influenced suspense drama about the efforts to trace a car with a faulty steering wheel. Tension breaks down under the strain of numerous sub-plots. (Jean-Marc Thibault, Barbara Laage; director, Alex Joffe. Cinepanoramic.)

FASTEST GUN ALIVE, THE (M-G-M) Small-town Western, adapted from a TV play, and culminating in gun duel between rival claimants to the title. Some elementary suspense, but the handling lacks grip. (Glenn Ford, Jeanne Crain, Broderick Crawford; director, Russell Rouse.)

***GREAT LOCOMOTIVE CHASE, THE** (Disney) Virtually Buster Keaton's *The General* presented straight. Likeable adventure story in the *Davy Crockett* manner with two splendid railway engines. (Fess Parker, Jeffrey Hunter; director, Francis D. Lyon. CinemaScope, Technicolor.)

***GREEN MAN, THE** (British Lion) Alastair Sim as a professional assassin attempts to liquidate a Cabinet Minister. Lightly macabre farce rather too conventionally developed, but with amusing moments. (George Cole, Terry-Thomas; director, Robert Day.)

***GUYS AND DOLLS** (M-G-M) Adaptation of the stage musical, with length and size having a slightly crushing effect on the story's casual charm. Sympathetic playing by Marlon Brando, a high-calibre score, and some cleverly staged numbers. (Jean Simmons, Frank Sinatra, Vivian Blaine; director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz. CinemaScope, Technicolor.)

HILL IN KOREA, A (British Lion) War drama about a British platoon trapped by the Chinese in Korea. Standard Service characterisations and much bloodshed. (George Baker, Harry Andrews, Stanley Baker; director, Julian Amyes.)

I'LL CRY TOMORROW (M-G-M) The case history of an alcoholic, based on Lillian Roth's book about her own experiences. Depths of alcoholic misery are ruthlessly and tastelessly plumbed. (Susan Hayward, Richard Conte, Jo Van Fleet; director, Daniel Mann.)

***INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** (A.B.-Pathe) Ingenious science fiction about a town taken over by a malignant form of plant life. Excellent atmosphere and some authentic thrills. (Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter; director, Don Siegel. SuperScope.)

****INVITATION TO THE DANCE** (M-G-M) Gene Kelly's experimental three-part dance film contains some amusing satire and ingenious animation effects, but the form is more inventive and original than the realisation. (Igor Youskevitch, Claire Sombert. Technicolor.)

IRON PETTICOAT, THE (Independent/British Lion) Soviet woman jet ace is indoctrinated in Western way of life by a U.S. air force officer. Mannerless Iron Curtain comedy with some distant echoes of *Ninotchka*. (Katharine Hepburn, Bob Hope; director, Ralph Thomas. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

***KING AND I, THE** (Fox) Adaptation of Rodgers and Hammerstein musical about the Victorian lady at the court of Siam. Treatment very stage-bound, but enlivened by Jerome Robbins' choreography, Irene Sharaff's gay costumes and Yul Brynner's authoritative playing. (Deborah Kerr; director, Walter Lang. CinemaScope 55, Eastman Colour.)

LETTERS FROM MY WINDMILL (Curzon) Three Daudet stories adapted by Marcel Pagnol. Slow and talkative, but the third and best episode, *The Secret of Master Cornille*, has fine Provencal landscapes and an attractive windmill. (Daxely, Rellys, Delmont.)

MOUNTAIN, THE (Paramount) Good brother tries to prevent bad brother from looting a crashed plane. Rather flatly handled, with strong performance by Spencer Tracy and excellent mountain scenery. (Robert Wagner, Claire Trevor; director, Edward Dmytryk. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

NANA (Gala) Sumptuously mounted but mechanical and repetitive version of Zola's novel. Some attractive interior designs; well upholstered performance by Martine Carol. (Charles Boyer, Walter Chiari; director, Christian-Jaque. Eastman Colour.)

***OKLAHOMA** (RKO-Radio) Outsize version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical: handsome Arizona locations, straightforward playing by Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones, melodramatic interventions from Rod Steiger, marathon dream ballet. (Gloria Grahame, Charlotte Greenwood; director, Fred Zinnemann. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

PROUD AND PROFANE, THE (Paramount) Novelettish tale of wartime passion in the Pacific with some echoes of *From Here to Eternity*. (William Holden, Deborah Kerr; director, George Seaton. VistaVision.)

RUN FOR THE SUN (United Artists) Fairly lively rehash of *The Hounds of Zoroff*, including lengthy chase through Mexican jungles with three Nazi spies and a pack of hounds as pursuers. (Richard Widmark, Trevor Howard, Jane Greer; director, Roy Boulting. SuperScope, Technicolor.)

SAILOR BEWARE! (Independent/British Lion) Young bridegroom, intimidated by domineering mother-in-law, sees her suitably chastened. Domestic comedy adapted from the stage, with formidable performance by Peggy Mount. (Ronald Lewis, Shirley Eaton; director, Gordon Parry.)

***SEARCHERS, THE** (Warners) Ford's new Western about the search for a white girl abducted by Indians. Some characteristic scenes and beautiful landscapes, but the realisation tends to be tentative and uncommitted. *Reviewed.* (John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter, Vera Miles. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

***SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT** (Films de France) Ingmar Bergman's coldly cynical study in period *amours*. Elegantly designed, beautifully photographed, ultimately hollow. *Reviewed.* (Eva Dahlbeck, Ulla Jacobsson, Gunnar Bjornstrand.)

***SOLID GOLD CADILLAC, THE** (Columbia) Comedy in which a girl holding ten shares in a New York corporation takes on and routs its corrupt board of directors. Engaging playing by Judy Holliday, though the script might have had a sharper edge. *Reviewed.* (Paul Douglas, Fred Clark; director, Richard Quine.)

***STELLA** (Intercontinental) Michael Cacoyannis' film about a cabaret singer's stormy relationship with a football player. Plenty of temperament, promise and vitality and a driving performance by Melina Mercouri. *Reviewed.* (George Foundas, Aleko Alexandrakis.)

THAT CERTAIN FEELING (Paramount) Cheerful comedy adapted from a Broadway success, with a return to form by Bob Hope as a neurotic strip-cartoonist. (Eva Marie Saint, George Sanders; directors, Norman Panama and Melvin Frank. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

23 PACES TO BAKER STREET (Fox) Blind American playwright, living in London, unravels murder and kidnapping tangle. Complex thriller with one or two exciting set-pieces. (Van Johnson, Vera Miles, Cecil Parker; director, Henry Hathaway. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

***TWO ACRES OF LAND** (Films de France) Indian neo-realist film concerning a poor peasant's efforts to raise money to pay off his landlord; the debt to de Sica is obvious, but the warmth and compassion are authentic. (Balraj Sahni, Nirupa Roy; director, Bimal Roy.)

WICKED GO TO HELL, THE (Miracle) Black and british melodrama about two escaped convicts, with Marina Vlady as an enigmatic Girl on the Beach. *Reviewed.* (Serge Reggiani, Henri Vidal; director, Robert Hossein.)

X THE UNKNOWN (Exclusive) British science fiction shocker in the *Quatermass* style about a Thing which feeds on radio-active material. Quite lively, though the monster itself lacks personality. (Dean Jagger, Edward Chapman; director, Leslie Norman.)

Préjean's Autobiography

THE SKY AND THE STARS

translated by VIRGINIA GRAHAM

Albert Préjean, the great comic actor who sprang to fame in René Clair's *The Italian Straw Hat* and *Sous les Toits de Paris*, has a story to tell which is worthy of *The Three Musketeers*. In the course of his film career he has been associated with nearly all the outstanding stars of the European film world, he has worked in France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and has seen the development of the screen from the time of the silent films to the latest Maigret stories. So, besides its appeal as an enchantingly gay autobiography, *The Sky and the Stars* throws valuable light on the history of the art of the cinema.

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